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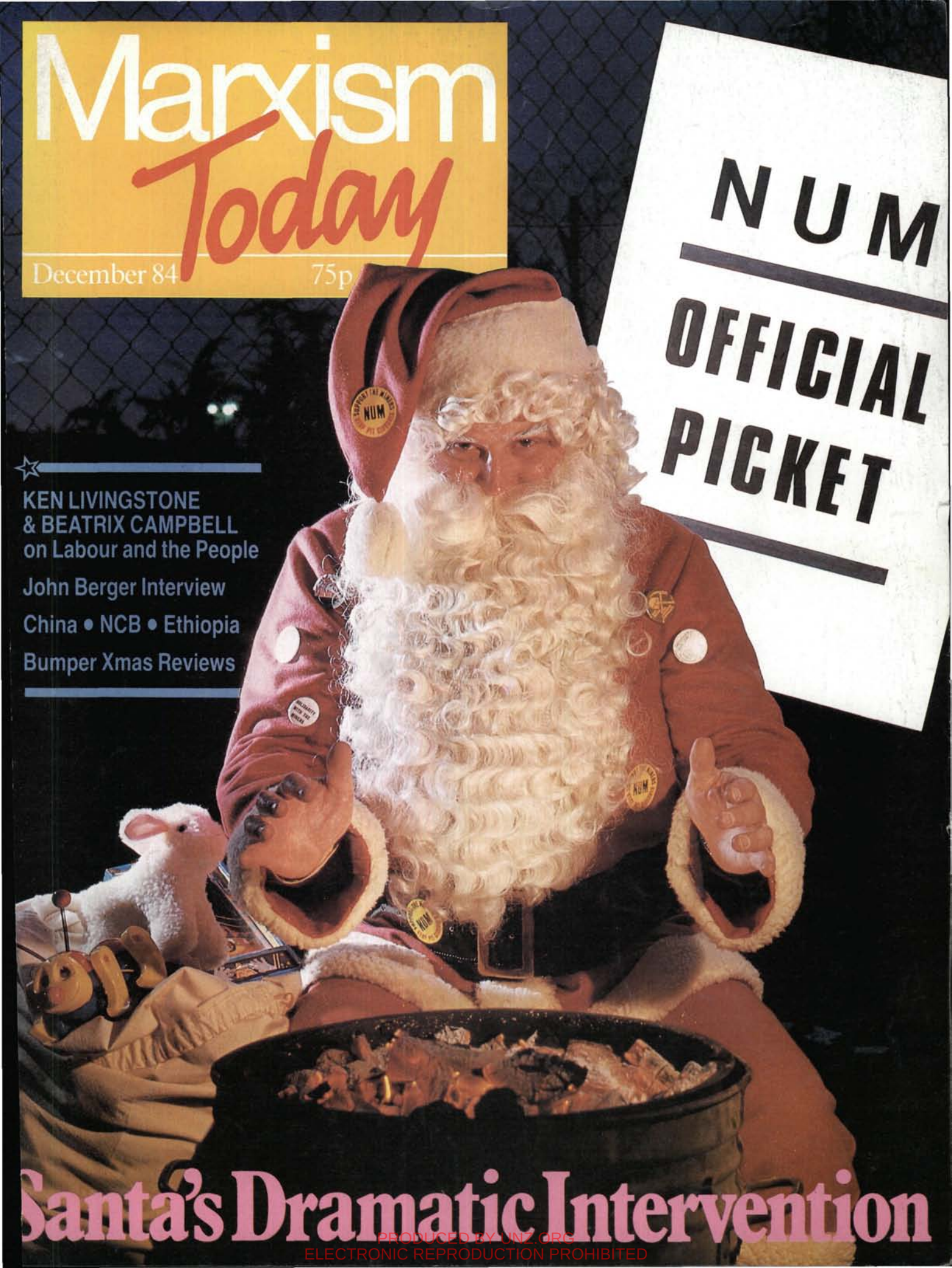

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Marxism

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DECEMBER · 1984 VOLUME 28 NUMBER 12

2 FOCUS
Britain and Ethiopia · Trouble at the Board · Mondale raygunned
Information technology industry breaks ranks

FEATURES

8 Hopes, Dreams and Dirty Nappies · Sheila Rowbotham
The Left doesn't believe in utopias. It should. They give us hope and imagination.

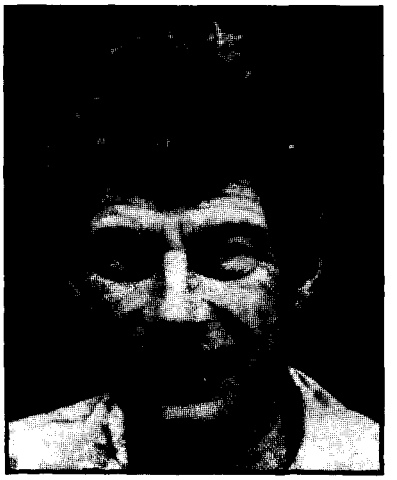
15 Let a Thousand Enterprises Bloom · John Gittings
China has gone in for a dose of decentralisation and the market.

19 Labour and the People · Ken Livingstone and Beatrix Campbell
One of the few left stars that has been burning brightly is the GLC. What wider lessons does it offer?

28 Bump Starting Britain · John Grahl
The old Keynesian model is dead · The radical Right are in trouble. But what does the Left offer the future?

33 What Britain Thinks · Gregor McLennan
Public opinion remains as contradictory and ambiguous as ever.

36 CHANNEL 5
Ways of Witnessing — Interview with John Berger
Following the Fight to the Finish — Paul Marshall



42 REVIEWS
It's nearly 1985, and time to look back on 1984. This is *our* round up:

1984: A Year of New Alliances? — Anne Phillips
Who's Afraid of Tariq Ali — Peter Riddell
Rigging Miracles — Joanna Goulding
Are You Wearing the Right Aftershave? — Carol Sarler
Pop's Young Fogeys — Marek Kohn
Video Viewpoint — Dave Rushton

48 VIEWPOINT
Keith Hill — Unions Labour: the nitty gritties
Ken Coates — Ballot Boycott

51 LETTERS

52 UPDATE

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BRITAIN AND ETHIOPIA

The British government's belated response to the Ethiopian famine has been a clear demonstration of the ineptitude and hypocrisy which mark its dealings with the Third World, and particularly Africa.

Over the last decade all British governments have become increasingly subservient to the United States in their policies towards Africa. The old colonial self-confidence, that Britain understood the continent and could count on the leaders of its former colonies to further British interests and their own at the same time, has withered away. Economic and socio-political crisis has gripped former British favourites such as Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana largely as a result of capitalism's world crisis, and the British reaction has been to ignore its seriousness as far as possible.

British aid to the Third World has always been both an arm of politics and an adjunct of British business. As Africa became less tractable politically and less interesting to British business, the attempt to monitor what was going on there or understand it dwindled in both government and civil service. The convenient myth was born that the British people were not interested in aid or the worsening plight of Africa.

But the television pictures of the Ethiopian famine have aroused such widespread sympathy in Britain that private gifts have almost matched government aid. The Government has been forced to act at last, and is also having to face questions about its own part in the tragedy. No amount of wriggling by clever spokespeople can obliterate the enormous responsibility which should be borne by Britain for the deaths of perhaps as many as 900,000 Ethiopians in this famine, which is worse than the notorious one ten years ago which brought down the Emperor Haile Selassie.

And that, as Professor Charles Elliot, former head of the charity Christian Aid, has so clearly and honestly explained, is the real story behind this famine. The United States led, and Britain followed, in an attempt to bring down the Ethiopian government, the Derg, by starving its citizens to death.

Exactly a year ago Ethiopia's top official responsible for relief and rehabilitation of the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians displaced by the war and drought that has ravaged the country since the revolution in 1974, came to London to ask the British government for food aid. Major Dawit Wolde Giorgis was visibly depressed after his meeting with Mr Timothy Raison, Minister for Overseas Development. Major Dawit's quiet exposé of the 'imminent threat of famine to six million Ethiopians' met with absolutely no response from British officials who talked blandly about former colonies' needs being a priority and Zimbabwe therefore being at the top of the British aid priority list. He had had an even colder reception the previous week in the United States.

Just a year before that, the Ethiopian government, faced with a clear downward trend in food production, had asked Britain and other Western countries for a commitment of 900,000 tons of grain over three years as a reserve to prevent famine if the drought continued. Pledges of 99,000 tons were made, of which only one third arrived.

Meanwhile the long term projects which could have reversed the downward trend in agricultural production never got off the ground largely because of the West's increasingly stingy aid policies.

Fifteen years ago the United Nations General Assembly set a target of 0.7% of GNP for the industrialised nations to give as aid. Judith Hart, when she was British Minister for Overseas Aid, in October 1975 committed the Government to working towards that goal. But by 1978 the actual aid total was only 0.46% and it has now shrunk to 0.35% of GNP.

Ethiopia, one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world by every international indicator, was at the bottom of the British list of priorities for any of that tiny amount of development aid. Not only had the Ethiopian government declared a commitment to socialism, but they had actually begun to carry it out by a dramatic land reform programme which simply wiped out the landowning class and made available to the peasants the 30% of rural output which had previously been paid to the landlords. Worse, the Derg, attacked by neighbouring Somalia in the east and ill-advised enough to carry on the Emperor's war in Eritrea, turned to the Soviet Union and Cuba for extensive military assistance.

The West's inexorable disinformation machine swept into action, fuelled by the early bloody power struggles in Addis Ababa. Although the most solid Eritrean political and fighting force, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, never became much of a favourite with the Western press, the other Eritrean movements with conservative Arab funding became a serious propaganda embarrassment to the Derg. Western diplomats also took up the claims of the new-born Tigrean People's Liberation Front with unnatural enthusiasm. With convenient timing for the host of Western aid agencies still trying to demonstrate that the Derg was not the organisation aid should be given to, the TPLF captured and quickly released two Americans who emerged full of praise for their polite captors. The TPLF had become a potent weapon against the Derg's survival.

Twenty three other African countries[1] are already suffering from food shortages and the same trend of declining food production as Ethiopia. The techniques for reversing it in the long term are available, just as the grain surpluses of Europe are available to meet the short term needs. But a change in the political will to work to prevent another Ethiopia is absent among Western leaders, though not among Western electorates.

Victoria Brittain

[1]Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mali, Mauretania, Mozambique, Sao Tome, Senegal, Somalia, Swaliland, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

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FOCUS

● TROUBLE AT THE BOARD

It's not every day that the head PRO at a major public corporation takes a room at its headquarters and gives a press conference to attack the chairman. But that was how Geoffrey Kirk, the NCB's director of information since 1960, and an employee – under five chairmen – since 1949 made a swift and dignified exit on November 6.

Kirk had been suspended a week earlier after yet another private row with Ian MacGregor, this time over his use of Michael Eaton the North Yorkshire Area director and the NCB's new 'voice'. In a misconceived attempt to allow the NUM's 'Libyan connection' a clear run on the front pages MacGregor had abruptly cancelled a series of briefings Eaton was in the process of giving. The result, of course, was that the front pages were filled instead with 'Eaton gagged' stories and MacGregor blamed Kirk. In fact Kirk had argued against the cancellation predicting exactly what would happen.

Widely respected, and the son of a Derbyshire colliery surveyor, Kirk had warmly welcomed the arrival of Eaton whom he saw as an ally. His own advice had up to now been pushed aside all too often in favour of three men with connections with the Thatcher entourage but none with the coal industry: Tim Bell from Saatchi and Saatchi, David Hart a freelance journalist and entrepreneur with sporadic contacts with working miners, and Gordon Reece the Prime Minister's image expert. It came as no pleasure to the loyal and professional Kirk to see that despite an overwhelmingly sympathetic press the NCB were still not winning the propaganda war.

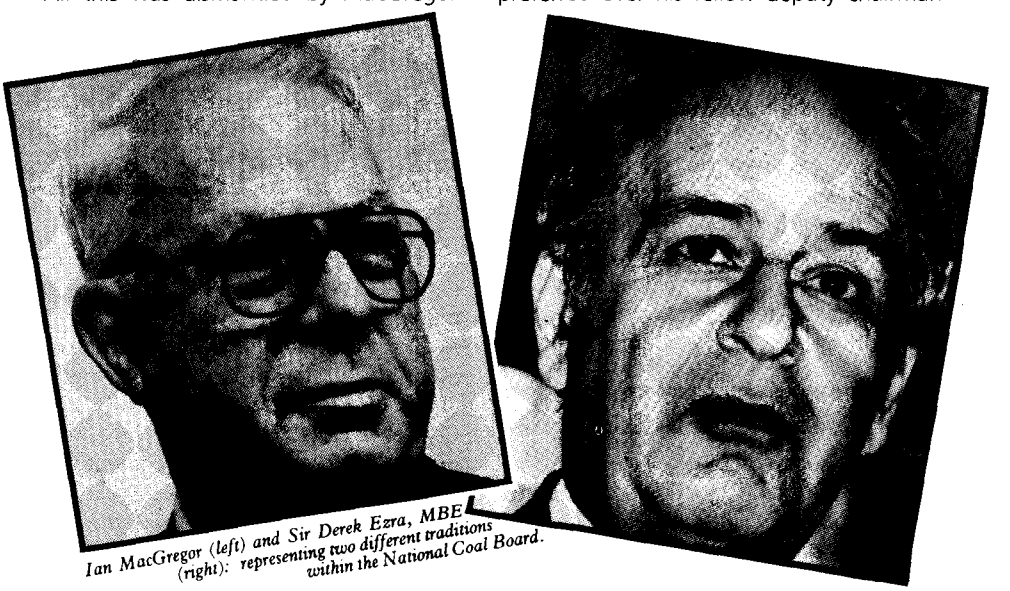
Kirk's dismissal brought morale to a new low in the NCB headquarters at Hobart House. But it also briefly exposed divisions within the Board which had not clearly surfaced before. The union for NCB executives, the TUC-affiliated but irrepressibly moderate British Association of Colliery Management demanded a meeting with MacGregor. Partly of course it was about Kirk, one of its members; but Alan Wilson the BACM general secretary also talked angrily about a 'loss of confidence' in MacGregor and the deputy chairman Jimmy Cowan.

Despite some trepidation, senior NCB staff were not against MacGregor from the start. They shared the economic objectives already in place for the industry – including the closure of loss making pits and a 4m further cut in capacity for this year. And from colleagues at BSC they gathered that MacGregor was a 'manager's manager'. Although Norman Siddall had been popular – and in industrial relations terms a triumph – he had left undone a number of corporate decisions – including for example the reorganisation of the NCB into eight rather than 12 areas, and it was assumed that MacGregor would set about them in earnest. But the honeymoon did not last long.

Until MacGregor arrived decisions were taken within the NCB on essentially Morrisonian lines. Committees of board members along with department heads and other senior officials (in a quasi civil service role) acted collectively. One result was that (for example) if a development decision was taken *both* the mining engineers and the marketing people had agreed and understood it. To an American-trained businessman like MacGregor it no doubt seemed cumbersome. But most senior Hobart House staff still believe it made sense in an industry dependent on one product and one technology.

All this was dismantled by MacGregor. First he reduced the number and influence of the full time directors, making all key departments, including the 12 area directors, report directly to himself and Cowan, now occupying a new office of chairman and chief executive. As part-time directors he brought in a series of mainly private sector businessmen with no direct experience of the coal industry including: David Donne, the chairman of Dalgety, Sir Melvyn Rosser, a partner in the accountancy firm Deloitte Haskins and Sells, and an ex-BSC board member with MacGregor, David Newbigging, the newly retired chairman of Jardine Matheson. In the meantime the part-time main board posts of highly respected insiders like Phil Weekes, the South Wales area director, were not renewed. The practical impact so far of the part-timers' appointments – particularly since the management's main objective has been crisis management since MacGregor took over – may not have been all that great. But the psychological effect was huge. By September Ian Wilson of BACM was writing in his quarterly newsletter: '. . . there is now little attempt made to appoint people whose loyalties are capable of being engaged by both Conservative and Labour governments. Increasingly the old Morrisonian approach to nationalised industries seems to be a relic of the past.'

The choice of Cowan as his lieutenant was an additional factor. Cowan had built up a reputation in Scotland largely on his record of closing pits – albeit by transferring displaced men to other mines. He was the Government's preferred choice as deputy. But his sometimes chilling personal manner – coupled with a formidable reputation for not taking decisions – makes him highly unpopular in Hobart House, the more so since he was preferred over his fellow deputy chairman the difficult, but highly competent John Mills. Mills distinguished himself by giving masterly evidence to the Selby planning enquiry and to the Monopolies' Commission enquiry into the industry. The story goes that he was told at his first meeting with MacGregor that he had no future with the Board.



Ian MacGregor (left) and Sir Derek Ezra, MBE (right): representing two different traditions within the National Coal Board.

It was Cowan who, correctly seeing Michael Eaton as one of three or four able and ambitious area directors jostling for position as a possible future chairman, ruled he should not be present in negotiations.

As the key industrial relations professional in the NCB, Ned Smith, the one man who had managed to maintain some contact with all the industry's unions throughout the dispute, found himself in a position not unlike Kirk's. Exasperated by MacGregor's combination of erratic and brusque public pre-

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sentation and lack of understanding of the British labour scene, he resigned at least once. The friction between the two men came to a head over the NACODS dispute, which MacGregor's injudicious remarks about the union leaders having agreed the new picketing guidelines sparked off. And MacGregor's remarks about the NCB not 'needing' pit deputies anyway helped to bump the pro strike majority up to 82%. Indeed Smith is said to have only agreed to come back and rescue the board from the NACODS dispute after the intervention of Peter Walker.

Of course the Government in its new found disenchantment with MacGregor – whom it appointed in a fanfare of self congratulation – has done its best to distance itself from all these errors. But it may be that the most long lasting division will be between those who see the last six months as a tragedy, who believe, in retrospect, that the March 6 closure announcement was a mistake because it handed the NUM a new 'casus belli' for a national strike; and those who were prepared to be used by the Government as a weapon to provoke and then defeat the NUM whatever the physical, economic and social costs to the industry. In fact there was little overt opposition to the March 6 announcement at the time from within the NCB; but with hindsight some NCB executives are now comparing it unfavourably with Norman Siddall's policy of closing pits 'by stealth' and without conflict.

James Freestone

● MONDALE RAYGUNNED

Nothing succeeds like excess. Ronald Reagan, the campaigner, was simply too much: too lucky with the economy, too reassuring about peace, too good on television, too infectiously self-confident, too presidential, too popular. His widely predicted landslide victory over Walter Mondale, a worthy but feeble Democrat, duly took place on November 6 to virtually nobody's surprise. For once, even the opinion polls got it right.

For the man, it was an almost unalloyed victory. His 525 votes in the electoral college (all of the 50 states except Mondale's native Minnesota, and the District of Columbia) were a record; his 59% of the popular vote was the fourth best presidential result ever. Except among black Americans, Reagan's popularity knew no bounds. In each age bracket, in every income class above $10,000 a year, with either sex, no matter where, Reagan was the clear winner. At a victory celebration he declaimed, 'This is the beginning of everything'. After such a sweep, hyperbole of that kind comes naturally.

For Reaganism, America's approval was more grudging. The president's coat-tails were shorter than in 1980, when the Republicans won the Senate. This time, the Democrats gained two seats, cutting Republican strength in the 100-member senate to 53. That leaves the Democrats with a strong chance of regaining control of the Senate (and its powerful committees) at the mid-term elections in two years time. The one triumph for the new Right was the re-election as senator from North Carolina of its absurd, if sinister, deacon Jesse Helms. The defeat of a moderate Republican in Illinois, Charles Percy, left Helms the chairmanship of the senate foreign relations committee for his taking.

'You ain't seen nothin' yet . . .'

The pattern was much the same in the House of Representatives. The Republicans' gain of about 14 seats was less than they had predicted and left the Democrats with a solid majority of 70 or so. Many Democrats, to be sure, are as conservative as Republicans. But to give the president the 'ideological' majority he wanted in the house, the Republicans still needed to have won at least 20 more seats.

Reagan's second-term popular mandate is accordingly tempered, even under the conventional definition of 'mandate', which overlooks the startling fact that, as usual, almost half of all voting age Americans did not bother to vote. Big victories in any event tend to beget big reverses. Consider the three presidents who have done better than Reagan in the popular vote. After 1936, Roosevelt overreached himself and Republicans, allied with conservative Democrats, brought the New Deal to a halt. Barely three years after his 1964 landslide, Johnson announced that he would not run again. Nixon resigned in disgrace 21 months after his 1972 trashing of George McGovern. This is no iron law. But every second-term president begins as a lame-duck.

Like Eisenhower in 1957-61, Reagan seems to have the vaguest of programmes for the second half of his presidency, having done well in the first half largely by postponing trouble. His immense personal capital is thus likely to dwindle fast. Exit polls on November 6 suggested that many voters greatly prefer Reagan to his party. If that is so, what little is left of Reagan's capital by the time of the next presidential campaign in 1988 will not be neatly transferable to his Republican heir. Just as the Democrats are well-placed to recover congressional seats in the 1986 mid-term elections, so, if good candidates present themselves, they have a good chance to retake the White House two years after that. Talk of a lasting party realignment that could make the Republicans the natural party of American government is thus probably premature. Below the level of president, where true party realignments must begin, there is even less evidence of an enduring switch to the Republicans.

There have often been times when to stress the differences between the two main parties in America would have been misleading. Without a socialist tradition, the labels, 'left' and 'right' have to be applied to Democrats and Republicans with care. Yet in Reagan's America, the distinction, on many, if not all issues, has become clearer. Republicans are doing well because of the resurgence of a full-throated conservatism. Democrats who accept this mood also do well, and

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those who resist it fail. Of course, those who do resist continue to get elected locally. (To find America's Left, look first at the grass roots and at non-party protest movements). But liberal or anti-conservative Democrats do not look like forcing their way back to national power any time soon, at least not under their own pressure.

That need not be cause for their despair. A vacuum created by Reaganite inaction and failure could pull them back to victory. Of that there is a fair, if far from certain, chance particularly should the dollar-growth bubble burst and foreigners stop financing America's large budget deficits.

There is also a less wishful reason for liberal Democrats not to be over-discouraged: social and economic forces in America seem to be changing too rapidly for politics to settle down for long into any fixed pattern. Within a quarter of a century, the Americans have had the liberal expansionism of Kennedy and Johnson, the detente conservatism of Nixon and Ford, the eclecticism of Carter and the right-wing nationalism of Reagan. For those depressed by the apparent hardiness of Reaganism, it is worth reflecting that in the shifting climate of today's America no 'ism' easily takes root.

Paul Fox

● INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY BREAKS RANKS

The UK information technology industry is taking a lead in criticising the Government's industrial policy, making dire predictions that unless there is action within 18 months the future of the industry will be blighted. The most solid criticism has come from the National Economic Development Office (NEDO) in a report which broke NEDO's normal restraint so far as to use the word 'crisis' in the title.

The report warned that, without drastic action, the UK information technology manufacturing industry will pass below a threshold of viability. It was put together by a very broad coalition of big manufacturers like ICL, representatives of the computer software and services sector, and trade unionists. IBM had just gained membership to the NEDO committee in a victory for its campaign to be recognised as a good UK citizen, but it had joined too late to be part of the drafting process.

The Department of Trade and Industry dismissed the report with a nod towards a series of support schemes launched in the past five years. But the criticism of the Government's stance has sharpened with an attack on both the direction and level of government support. Sir Kenneth Corfield, chairman of Standard Telephones and Cables, raised his voice against the degree of priority government support of research gives to the defence sector as against the civil sector. Corfield has recently had his stature in the UK information technology industry raised by the successful acquisition of ICL. The enlarged Standard Telephones group now covers chip manufacturing, mainframe, mini and personal computer manufacturing, telecommunications media like fibre optics, a software house and, the core of the business, telecommunications switching products.

Corfield was joined in his criticism by the head of the National Computing Centre, a privately supported club of computing vendors and users which was established with government support. The NCC made detailed criticisms of the UK initative to develop fifth generation computer systems which goes under the name of the author of a report into the topic, John Alvey. The Alvey initiative is too biassed away from the genuine use of computers, the NCC claimed.

To these two critics must be added the continuous barrage of complaints made about the provisions for training people in skills which the information technology industry is crying out for. The information technology industry, in general, is a firm supporter of free market economics. It is believed that only the rigours of the free market will allow technology to be fully exploited. The general thinking in the boardrooms of the industry accepts as a tenet of faith that state intervention distorts that free market. The interesting point is that, when it comes to individual cases, state support is seen as essential.

ICL, for instance, argues that the level of US state support is massive, mostly filtered out to the biggest companies in the form of contracts for the Pentagon. Just to balance that out, ICL believes that state support should be stronger.

Despite these individual pleas for state assistance, however, the philosophy of a free market is accepted, almost relished. The critics are not proposing that massive state intervention along the lines of the French government programme initiated after Mitterrand's election is either on the cards or should be contemplated. Instead they say that the support already given should be redirected and amplified by a series of other measures to strengthen the base of the UK industry. All these changes, they claim, are well within the government's philosophy of a free market and well within its current budgets.

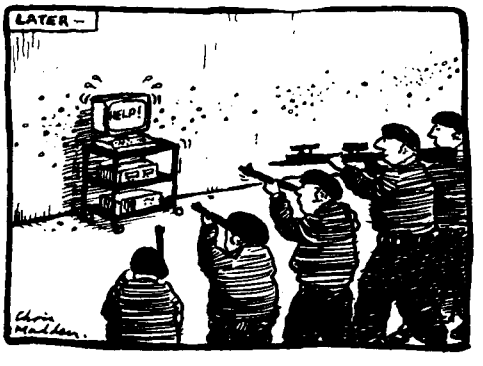
To this extent, the criticism of the government by information technology critics is very damaging. The criticism is essentially from within the government's ideological camp and so cannot be dismissed as easily as the demands for more drastic intervention made by the Left.

Kenneth Baker, the minister who was in charge of information technology before he was moved to do battle with Ken Livingstone and the six metropolitan counties, was always able to give the air of a man with a deep interest in the welfare of the industry, an interest which he has had for years. Baker, in short, would have been able to deflect a lot of the criticism. Not so the new minister, Geoffrey Pattie.

The Department has made one decision that got a lot of support from some quarters of the industry and was directly in line with its free market philosophy: stopping IBM and British Telecom from setting up a joint computer and telecommunications network to carry users' data over it. This proposal, called Jove, was a massive threat to other potential network suppliers who could use British Telecom's telecommunications facilities to offer similar services. The Department squashed the Jove proposal on the grounds that IBM and British Telecom combined would be more than a match for anybody and so kill off competition in a potentially lucrative market.

The government's critics are saying now that banning initiatives is OK but it hardly constitutes a comprehensive industrial policy.

Richard Sharpe



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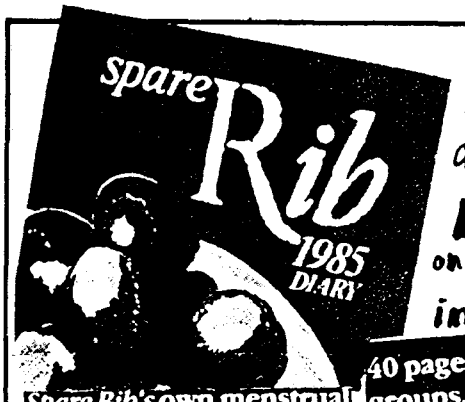

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Fill a miner's stocking for Christmas

By the time Christmas comes around, the miners will have been on strike for nearly 10 months. That's 10 months without any wages, any strike pay and, in many cases, any social security benefits.

The hardship endured by miner's families was bad enough in the summer. In winter, it becomes even worse. No money to buy fuel, insufficient food, severe debts on electricity and gas bills. And as for the usual Christmas celebrations, with presents, Christmas meals and festivities, it will only be those who have returned to work that will be able to enjoy these.

Marxism Today is therefore appealing to readers to send in as much money as they can spare, so that we can buy presents for the kids, and turkeys, Christmas puddings and all the seasonal trimmings for the families. On 22 December, the *Marxism Today* van will take all that we have bought and collected to a joint NUM-*Marxism Today* social in the coalfields, at which the food and presents will be distributed. A victory for the miners will be a victory for the British people and a tremendous setback for Thatcherism. Help bring that victory nearer by filling in the form below.

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What can utopias do for mothers and mothers do for utopias? Answer found on mug.

Hopes, Dreams & Dirty Nappies

Sheila Rowbotham

WHAT DO UTOPIAS and nappies have to do with one another and what kind of indulgence is it to be musing on utopias when the world is in such dangerous times and we are fighting for the very existence of the labour movement?

There is one answer to both questions. It happens to be conveniently written on the London Printworkers' mug for the children of striking miners which I managed to buy at *Marxism Today*'s 'Left Alive', just as it was being stowed away in a large crate. 'Fleet Street's other voice' reminds us that we are 'Working for a better future for the children of today and tomorrow.'

If we cease to ask of the future what may we hope, we are truly lost. For hope links the practical everyday problems and the will to understand. It is intrinsically questioning and critical of the reality in which it is rooted.

Utopias are the images which hope projects. They surround us daily, for the media deals in dreams of freedom, security and pleasure with ever greater intensity as the world outside becomes more perilous.

Socialists know these dreams play false with hope because on the whole they promise freedom at the expense of others' inequality.

But can the great dream convince? Can there be freedom and equality in this world? I interrogate the mug.

What kind of better future can socialism offer for the children of today and tomorrow? Can we honour the promise with practical solutions to class, race and sex inequality, bad housing, crowded schools with inadequate numbers of teachers and stocks of teaching materials, cuts in the health service, unemployment, dead-end jobs, low pay, long hours of overtime, dangerous working conditions. Are even these traditional preoccupations of socialism sufficient when our cities have become places of danger where children face death from motor car accidents, poisoning from petrol fumes or from asbestos in their schools? Or when parents have good reason to fear that children could be vulnerable not only to assault from criminals but particularly, if they are black, from the law itself? How can we in good faith argue for a democratic and equal society without tackling the tremendous contradiction in how the labour and rewards of society are distributed in modern capitalism, in which the skills and creativity of many women are consumed in the main responsibility for caring for children at the same time as working for low wages. This uneven apportioning of effort and energy makes it difficult for the women in this predicament to get any chance to discuss, meet, think, plan, organise or even just go out and enjoy themselves.

Expanding the meaning of socialism

Socialism has to be not only about more things, about improved services and facilities. It has to be a better more democratic way of getting things done and enjoying living together.

Does the existing scope of the word socialism encompass what this means? Does it begin to tackle how to redesign how we live conveniently and commodiously, not just our own living rooms but our neighbourhoods and cities? Does it equitably resolve how we share out the labour of production *and* care for those who are not able to maintain themselves, the sick and old as well as our young? Does socialism suggest an experiencing of delight in the intercourse, concourse, conversation of daily life and a deeper enrichment of the individual spirit, a new culture in which craft, nurture skill, creativity and science transcend their present meanings?

It seems to me that socialist ideas puff along, trying to catch up with events. It is such a job analysing everything in capitalism with new circumstances changing the terms of reference all the time. How do we get onto ground to change the terms in which the circumstances arrive? There is no substitute for hard thinking and elbow grease and both have their satisfactions. But they need a bit of oomph. There's no doubt about it. The unequal distribution of oomph is where hope and utopia come in.

Hope and utopia are the magic carpets in the old stories, the alchemists' quest for gold from dross metal. They transport and transform. Perhaps this sounds a bit old fashioned for a technological age so we could say they are the means of dissolving in one dimension and appearing in a new setting.

Pretty handy. Far too handy to leave to the Conservatives.

On the contrary we should protect, nurture, honour and cherish the potential in every human being to imagine the means of living in freedom, equality and love. For this potential is the relentless foe of Conservatism based on fear and guarded by coercion which destroys the world and denies our humanity.

it seems to me that socialist ideas puff along, trying to catch up with events

Utopias and the Marxist tradition

The modern Marxist tradition has tended to stress the negative element in utopian thought – imagining what you want without paying attention to how you get there. The preoccupations of 'utopian socialism' can be relegated to a lower rung in the evolution of thought in which Marxism appears at the top as the more highly developed form. Marx and Engels, those most historical of thinkers, conjured themselves out of history and it has proved reassuring amidst flux and confusion for many Marxists to cover up the trick involved in their vanishing act. This is counterproductive.

The strength of Marxism is in its understanding of historical forces and its strategic assessment of what the possibilities for human action are in a given histor-

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ical situation. It was an enormous gain in considering the strategic odds. It is strong on the how to get there.

But the effort to get anywhere becomes a ritual without meaning unless there is a conception of where you are going or at least the reason for travel. And this is the light which in modern times both Marxism and Labourism have not tended. There were negligences amidst the gains in Marx and Engels' thought.

Since Marx and Engels pondered the machinations of capital people have extended the forms of resistance in innumerable movements which have partially revealed aspirations and dilemmas which do not fit tidily into the existing body of assumptions about what socialism is about. But from all these resistances how can we glimpse an alternative way of living – a different basis of society than profit and competition. And how can it be that as creatures of this world – the world as it is – we come to desire something else?

When we glimpse freedom and equality are we to relegate it to the future or try and live differently? If we seek to live the future in present what are the traps which will distort and deform our vision? How can they be avoided?

Big general questions can be daunting unless we mull them over in relation to what we have seen and heard in our own political experience and knowledge of past struggles. Arriving at ideas is a long story but some of the ingredients which have gone into my own questioning of the dismissal of utopia, have been the student movement in the late 60s, the emergence of women's liberation and my interest in the thought of socialists like Edward Carpenter and William Morris.

For example, in 1968 when German students set up creches in which men and women cared for children they said it was necessary, 'to counter the seemingly immutable reality with alternatives proven to be possible and practical. Throughout history inexorable social realities have always overshadowed utopias, but today prototypes of future forms of organisation can be productive factors in shaping a new society.'

When women said certain changes in how we lived and related with men were preconditions for our developing ideas and taking part in a democratic movement of equals we were often told by socialist men that we were being utopian.

As I learned more about the history of socialist and feminist thought it became evident that neither side had got all the answers, Marxist or not. Like many other socialist feminists I came to see Marxism as a mix of gains, overtakings, negligences and loss. We all need to continually make it anew.

We could not afford to squander insights which have been disregarded on the way. For Edward Carpenter democracy meant that the ways we personally encountered each other had to change. For Morris our capacity to craft beauty around us was a gift to the socialist future.

Utopia is not necessarily frozen in the future. It is not necessarily the polar opposite to strategy. It intertwines with the assessment of the odds. Indeed it actively affects the odds. It reveals a terrain in which we can manoeuvre to advantage.

In his postscript to *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* in 1976, EP Thompson observed that modern Marxism's denial of the imaginative utopian faculties meant it lacked the ability to project any images of future. Without these, people tended to fall back on the utilitarian earthly paradise of economic growth.

The fading of a dream

This struck home to me because the spontaneous utopian combustion which had had such explosive energy when women's liberation first erupted was dying down. While much less likely to reduce life's problems to economics than socialists, feminists were talking about how our wants and desires did not appear to change as fast as we had initially assumed they would. We were uneasy and frightened by the rage which disappointed hope turned upon ourselves. Apparently mysterious forces seemed to congeal aspirations for adventure into a new consensus subculture of what we ought to think, feel, do.

The imaginative utopian qualities may grace new social movements but they do not stick around unless they are consciously tended. Why had we been so daring and grown so afraid all in the span of a decade? What are the sources of the courage to change?

Edward Thompson quotes a French historian Leon Abensour as saying that

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utopian writing expresses the desire to make a break, to risk an adventure, or an experience in the fullest sense of the word which allows us to glimpse or see or even to think what a theoretical text would never by its very nature allow us to think.

the unequal distribution of oomph is where hope and utopia come in

In 1977 while I was turning these thoughts around someone got me to read Ursula le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. It seemed to be exploring zones socialists had become silent about. It brought into relief the relation of individual and community – albeit on another planet.

And I became a mother. Abstract theoretical concepts of alternatives which were possible and practical against the seemingly inexorable social realities became passionate necessities. Why did you have to tear yourself in two to earn a living and care for a child? Why did the timing and geography of daily life appear to be an elaborate plot to drive you into despair and exhaustion? Had the men who designed the tubes and the buses been part of a conscious conspiracy to bar babies from the West End?

A utopia called Mothercare

Mothers it seemed to me needed a break. Mothercare could do with utopia. Perhaps mothers could do something for utopia too. Existing utopias tended to be somewhat male-defined.

But socialists and feminists have had some difficulty with motherhood over the years. It has repeatedly been bundled back to the Conservatives in exasperation at its resilience to radical change. It is no good at all telling mothers what they ought to want. Like all busy people they have enough on their plate without being bossed about. But there are a whole range of practical improvements, from improving the circumstances of maternity, to better training for nursery workers, from more resources for the care of under fives to crossings, lorry bans and redesign of transport, which have been part of the struggles of the women's movement to improve the material conditions of mothering.

There have also been attempts to change the personal relationship of mothering among women and among men and women. There is an interesting literature about relationships between mothers and daughters and recently fathers and sons.

But there are still real problems in envisaging how mothering might change, indeed how women want it to change or children too; what kind of changes this would involve in society as a whole.

There is a continuing pressing contradiction in modern capitalism's use of women's capacities as low paid workers and as domestic carers. This is not something out there in a sociological sense, it devastates daily life. And it affects our consciousness most intimately. There is a personal psychological split in the experience of anyone (customarily mothers) who is mainly responsible for a child or another dependent and earning a living. How far is this a matter of social organisation? Is an element of conflict part of the connection and separation of a child from its mother?

Jane Lazare has called it 'The Mother Knot'. She remarks in her book of that title how she and other mothers she knew increasingly began sentences saying one thing and ended them by saying the opposite. When I read this I thought 'Good heavens it isn't just me then'. I had noticed that with maternity my brain seemed to have developed a curious resistance to go from A to B. It would loop, double back, zig zag, anything but an orderly progress. I and other mothers can often be heard to complain in the same breath that we want time alone and miss our children when we are apart.

Is this really so odd? Surely most human beings trundle through life wanting contradictory things at the same time, freedom and security, recognition and difference, passionate bonding and contemplative solitude. Only in certain historical instances does clarity prevail.

Conservatives assume contradiction means people are incapable of knowing what they want and tell us better the devil we know. On the Left we are often ashamed of wanting apparently opposing things at the same time. We are used to demands, programmes, resolutions and feel we have to bottle up contradictory desires. This is ill advised because the unconvinced sniff zealous hypocrisy and view what we say with suspicion.

An exploratory grope

When the women's liberation movement first developed it cleared a space to explore and reveal the confusion of wants and desires about how we wished to live and relate as women and through this process we sought to understand the structures which thwarted feelings, thoughts and aspirations. The creation of space for trust, exploration, the renewal of identity was not a new discovery. In different ways it is a feature of many religious and social movements.

But we like many others found it hard to sustain the acceptance of imaginative ambiguity and open transformation. Factions, the hardening of assumptions, the separation of theory and practice, the divorce of demands from social relations, were no respecter of sex. Like it or not we were making politics and liable to knocks and scars. As the old Russian proverb goes 'if you like tobogganing you have to be prepared to push your sledge uphill.'

why had we been so daring and grown so afraid all in the span of a decade?

Yet I wasn't the only one reading Ursula le Guin and Naomi Mitchison and Doris Lessing. Why this persistent interest in fantasy? Was it because of despair at changing the here and now? Or was it a response to recognising an impasse had been reached? The present way of living in capitalist society may not be what we want but in the depth of our souls we had to admit that we could not, with confidence, conceive an alternative.

Utopian fantasy is thus an exploratory grope. It exercises the imagination. It keeps the connections jumping when they cannot join up neatly with practical action.

Despite incongruities between action and aspiration, women's liberation as a movement has been prepared to value dream and fantasy in assessing our predicament more than contemporary socialism. Breaks, adventures, glimpses have been greeted with a degree of cheery hospitality by feminists who know that the problem of moving from existing needs to transforming the scope and capacity to desire is especially knotty for women because there is social inequality and biological difference to fortify the refrain – 'You can't change human nature'.

Take pregnancy and child bearing for

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example. We ignore them at our peril, but in their celebration we can fall into the conservative assumption that the boundaries of women's capacity are marked by biology.

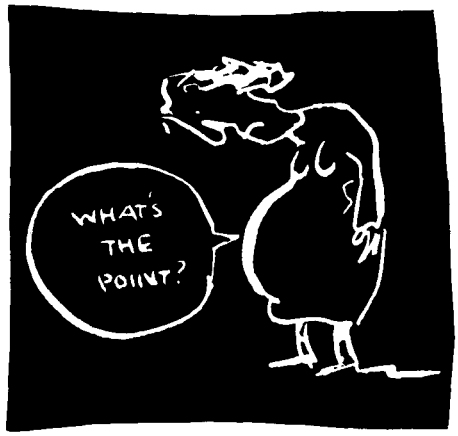
Feminists have had to struggle to acknowledge biology as an element in material existence, and to trace how the social meaning of pregnancy and birth changes historically while the psychological experience of each individual differs. This complexity in the case of one group, women, and one experience, bringing new life into the world, would indicate that there is not going to be a single fixed agreed utopia but a continuing movement between biology and hope, material reality and aspiration, experience and conceptualising, the unknown and naming.

A woman-centred society

In considering utopias as stories it is not so much their fixed virtues as ideals but a means of putting time aside to jog the imagination and let fancy roam. It is the *process* of intertwining hopes for the future and analysis of the present which can shift seemingly immutable realities.

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1915 and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* in 1976 present two quite different feminist utopias of mothering.

Gilman constructs a woman-centred society around motherhood as a means of evolving socially different values to male



dominated capitalism. The whole society is based on mothering as the three men who arrive there by chance discover. There are no men and mysteriously the women have only girls.

'We are used to seeing what we call "a mother" completely wrapped up in her own pink bundle of fascinating babyhood and taking but the faintest theoretic interest in anybody else's bundle, to say nothing of all the common needs of all the bundles. But the women were working together at the grandest of tasks – they were making People and they made them well.'

Gilman tells us that a society which values mothers in this way changes the manner in which women are mothers.

'They were mothers not in our sense of helpless involuntary fecundity forced to fill and overfill every land and then see their children suffer, sin and die, fighting horribly with one another: but in the sense of Conscious Makers of People. Mother love with them was not about passion, a mere 'instinct', a wholly personal feeling – it was a religion'.

The problem with *Herland* as a general utopia for women is that it could be pretty oppressive if you have no desire to be mothers or if you do not want mothering to be so central and dominant in your life.

Giving up that one power

In Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Connie moves from a repressive mental institution in present day America to a happier future society of democratic, ecological, small community units in which people express emotion easily, in which sexual relations are almost free from jealousy and not age bound. People are

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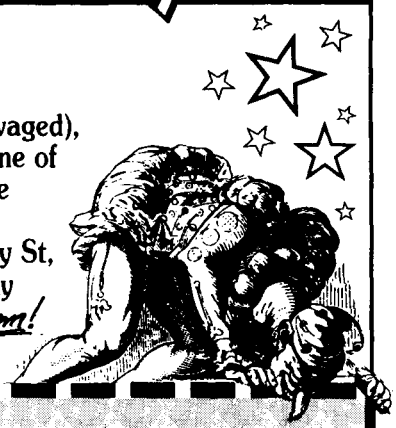

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careful not to waste natural resources. They do not shove onto other people their own anger and frustrations. They recognise association and the need to be separate and they have fun. For parties they design special flimsies instead of the serviceable clothing for everyday wear.

But – and this horrifies Connie – children are bred in machines.

Sacco-Vanzetti, a character of indeterminate sex explains, 'It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanised to be loving and tender.'

Sacco-Vanzetti explained every child had three carers to break the nuclear bond. Connie recoils from this, recalling her passionate memories of her own daughter. During one discussion, a man called Barbarossa bursts in and picks up a baby.

'He sat down with the baby on a soft padded bench by the windows and unbuttoned his shirt. Then she felt sick.

as the old Russian proverb goes 'If you like tobogganing you have to be prepared to push your sledge uphill'

He had breasts. Not large ones. Small breasts, like a flat-chested woman temporarily swollen with milk. Then with his red beard, his face of a sunburnt forty-five year old man. Stern visaged, long-nosed, thin-lipped, he began to nurse. The baby stopped wailing and began to suck greedily. An expression of serene enjoyment spread over Barbarossa's intellectual school-master's face. He let go of the room, of everything and floated. Her breasts ached with remembrance.'

Connie responded with anger.

'Yes how dare any man share that pleasure. These women thought they had won, but they had abandoned to men the last refuge of woman. What was special about being a woman here? They had given it all up. They had let men steal from them the last remnants of ancient power, those sealed in blood and in milk'.

Connie reassures us of many aspects of the world we know, a necessary sceptical device to create tension in utopia. 'Well at least you're not so crazy about ecology that you wash diapers' she says. Only to be told that the disposables are made from corn husks and cobs which turn into ecological compost.

Marge Piercy's utopia approaches the transformation of mothering completely differently from Charlotte Perkins Gil-

man, breaking down all elements in the division of activity between men and women and eliminating biological difference by technology. Instead of evolving a whole society around mothering, mothering is not specific to women, it is for everyone part of social relationships in general.

I think personally I could settle down there more easily than in *Herland*. I find Barbarossa's breast feeding a bit startling but I can imagine getting used to it. But like Connie I baulk at those machine-bred children. I would hang on to my return ticket to the bad old world because of them. It seems profoundly pessimistic to assume there cannot be equality while this difference remains between men and women.

The value of that mug

Of course mothering is not the only aspect of womens' lives to be illuminated by fantasy and utopia. Doris Lessing, Naomi Mitchison, Marion Bradley, Anne McCaffrey, to name but a few are busy weaving stories around women as administrators, explorers, rulers, wisewomen and dragon tenders. But precisely because mothering seems to be so rooted in maintaining and preserving and because the Conservative philosophy is so tender of the hearth – except when the demands of state require the sacrifice of children to enhance the glory of our rulers – an attempt to grapple both with the practical contradictions of mothering and the passions they arouse is vital.

What can we learn by conceiving alternative relations of mothering, about the move from existing need to future desires?

Ann J Lane in her introduction to *Herland* says, 'Because women are nurturers of the young and bearers of the cultural values of love and co-operation, and because women have been excluded from the sources of power, they are in an ideal position to create an alternative social vision'.

This perspective is attractive. It is most flattering to be told that while you are busy putting on the snugglers you are the heralds of a new social order. Moreover such an approach is not based on biological destiny but on social experience.

But it still acts to enclose us in our difference. For in truth women do not only know nurture, love and co-operation. In our subordination we have sufficient familiarity with their opposites. To be oppressed does not make us helpless victims but it does not mean we are pure. We do not hold a ready-made alternative as women. But like all subordinated groups women contribute understandings and visions. For the specific experiences of women are likely to express needs and desires from different points of view. While the emphases and vantage points will differ between women they are still going to open up perspectives men are likely to ignore. The differences in material and social predicaments can be a source of imaginative strength and mutual solidarity. For instance to give birth is to be the connecting point from the present to future. And when you are in labour second thoughts are by the way. You go through with it.

The women against pit closures have extended the meaning of resistance from saving an industry to guarding an entrance through which we all gain a chance to make a better future.

The utopian vision of a deeper and more democratic community has come out of this grim and bitter strike. Men's closer relationship to children and women's participation in politics are just two aspects of this. The specific concerns of women move into politics as general concerns. Difference is stated and transcended.

In times of desperation and severity perhaps women also contribute to the making of an alternative liberatory vision of society by an intransigent resolve to connect and deliver the present to the future.

Which all goes to show that my London Printworkers' mug was a pretty good buy. There is a great deal to interrogate in a mug like that. □

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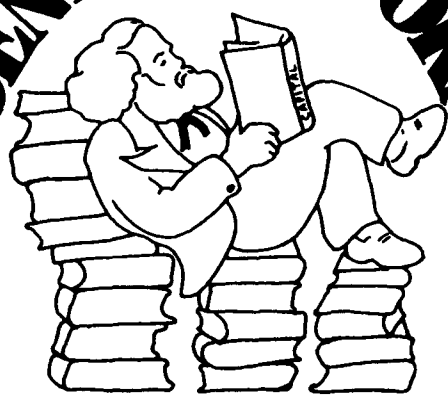

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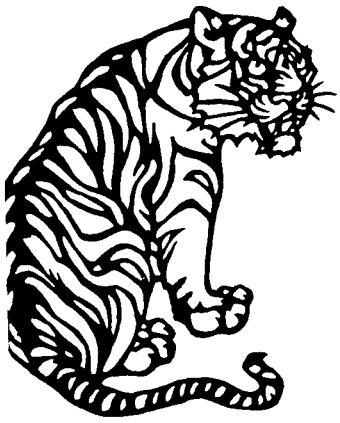

The recent proposals for economic reform in China include the loosening of planning controls and some reinstatement of market principles. But the change of emphasis is very cautious, and the effects will be watched closely.

Let a Thousand Enterprises Bloom

John Gittings

ONE SHORT SENTENCE from the recent lengthy Chinese document on economic reform was seized on with glee by many foreign commentators. It came from the section of the Central Committee decision on 'the reform of the economic structure' (20 October 1984) which rejected 'egalitarian thinking', and said that it was quite legitimate for 'some regions, enterprises and individuals. . . to get better off first through diligent work'. The document as a whole was widely interpreted – with a good deal of Mao-would-turn-in-his-mausoleum type of commentary – as signifying the embrace of capitalism by the post-Mao leadership of Mr Deng Xiaoping. And even when this supposed 'return to capitalism' did not appear in the story, it was hard to keep it out of the headline.

This sort of labelling is not only glib (and often performed by people who have little idea of what socialist economic policies might consist of). It also removes the necessity of seeking to analyse in more detail the real but complex changes which are occurring in production relations in China, and it glosses over both the tentative nature of many of the reforms and the evident opposition to them. On the Left too, where there has been a general loss of interest in Chinese economic development since the demise of 'Mao's socialist man', there has been a tendency to trivialise the issue in this smartly cynical way. The result is a strange consonance between old-style Maoists, new Leftists and native Chinese bureaucrats in accusing Mr Deng Xiaoping and his fellow-reformers of following the capitalist road.

Mao and Deng

Mao would probably have disapproved of many of the new policies, but we cannot be sure (he was capable of enormous shifts of perspective) and it does not really matter. In the early 1960s Mao – particularly in his *Notes on the Soviet Textbook on Political Economy* – did show some intuitive insight into the problem of how to define the political economy of a transitional socialist society. His most perceptive comment which should be borne in mind today was that in this area we are 'operating largely in the realm of the unknown'. Thereafter his thinking, and with it the thinking of those political economists who survived during the Cultural Revolution, became stultified by slogans about 'putting politics in command'.

> a good deal of Mao-would-turn-in-his-mausoleum type of commentary

Meanwhile the Chinese economy was becoming more complex, as the improvements in energy production, communications, diversity of products, education and technology began to spread more widely and influence consumer expectations. There is a dated whiff of belief in voluntarism about the view that somehow Mr Deng Xiaoping has wrenched China off one track and onto another. Already in the mid-1970s, while Mao was still alive and the door had begun to open to the west, the pressures from below were building up for economic reforms which would extract the benefit from the advances already made in the material base.

Visible signs of these advances range from the much advertised development of nuclear weapons and rocketry to the improvement in everyday standards of diet and clothing. The rapid increase in continental oil production in the 1970s is a good example of the pay-off which has accrued in many areas of the economy after previous decades of hardship and enforced self-reliance.

The 1980s now sees the extension of this programme, with foreign participation, into the offshore fields. China already exports close on nine million tons of oil annually, mostly to Japan. The purchase of industrial plant has come in waves of ever-increasing size at roughly ten year intervals, with Japan now the principal supplier. Technological diffusion is becoming less uneven, at least along the main lines of communication and on the more developed eastern and southern seaboards. Attention now is shifting to the problem of how to 'unlock' the western interior provinces. New railway lines have already created new east-west links, a second north-south network and (still in progress) a pioneering line into Tibet. Foreign trade took off in the late 1970s, expanding threefold between 1977 and 1981. Growth continues with the steady shift towards increased exports of manufactured commodities and light industry.

In agriculture the now officially discredited age of the people's communes did result in enormous investments of labour in improving arable land, and also in creating a fairly widespread network of human resources, for example in the extension of secondary education to the countryside. There has been a dramatic increase in the application of chemical fertilisers (from under 11 million tons in 1979 to over 16 in 1983), and a 30% increase in total power for farm machinery over the same period. Rural electricity is now generally available in the more developed half of the country, as are all-weather roads. There has also been considerable expansion in the circulation of manufactured products, not only locally but through inter-provincial trading, which is now given further encouragement by the relaxation of planning restrictions.

But the superstructure of bureaucratic

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leadership has not surprisingly proved resistant to reform. The Central Committee reached its 'Decision of Reform of the Economic Structure' at a plenum on 20 October 1984 after six days of preliminary discussion and some indications of disagreement. The decision should be seen as an outline of general principles rather than a detailed blueprint for change. It is an attempt to present reforms in planning, management, and wages and prices, in terms which are still consistent with a society in which public ownership predominates. But the bureaucracy has been adept in the past at accepting verbal formulae in principle which can then be frustrated in practice. The document acknowledges the problem, saying that it is necessary first 'to achieve unity of thinking and enhance it among all the comrades in the party (particularly among leading party comrades)'.

The three large areas of reform affect the mainly urban sectors of industry and commerce, and in many cases the document seeks to legitimise changes which have already been carried out experimentally in chosen cities or industries. (The reform of agriculture, shifting away from collective production at the team level to the devolution of production responsibility to the individual household, has moved much further and has fewer critics at high levels).

Planning

(a) Planning: planning in a socialist society, argues the document, can only be 'rough and elastic' for a long time to come, and should seek 'to exercise control over major issues while allowing flexibility on minor ones'. It is not incompatible with the development of a socialist commodity economy in which 'the law of value must be consciously followed and applied'. Mandatory planning should be confined to the 'major products which have a direct bearing on the national economy'. Other major products should be subject to 'guidance planning', while a large number of smaller items can be left to regulation by the market. More attention should be paid to long term macro-planning while annual plans should be simplified, and the whole operation should be supported by higher standards of statistical information and forecasting.

Most of these points were made before – some by Mao himself (who always regarded planning as a blunt instrument) – and the document is careful to assert that 'ours is on the whole a planned economy. . . not a market economy.' The three-tier system (mandatory planning, guideline planning and items outside the plan) was described even during the Cultural Revolution by Joan Robinson and other visitors as a notable feature of the Chinese system. It worked less flexibly than they supposed, and in view of this historical difficulty in loosening controls from the grip of a centralised bureaucracy, it seems quite possible that China will continue to suffer from too much rather than too little planning.

the legitimisation of the get-rich-quick attitude

Enterprise management

(b) Enterprise management. This is an area of significant change where Mao – who insisted that local party bodies should 'lead' economic enterprises – would have been more likely to disapprove. But in practice there has been nothing particularly socialist about such leadership. Everyone with direct experience of Chinese industry and commerce, from ordinary workers to foreign business people, can tell stories about the unqualified apparatchiks who so frequently paralyse enterprise initiative. (The same applies to educational establishments). Mao attached particular importance to the need for local party leaders to 'mobilise the masses in production'. In most cases this has been a hollow slogan since the Great Leap Forward.

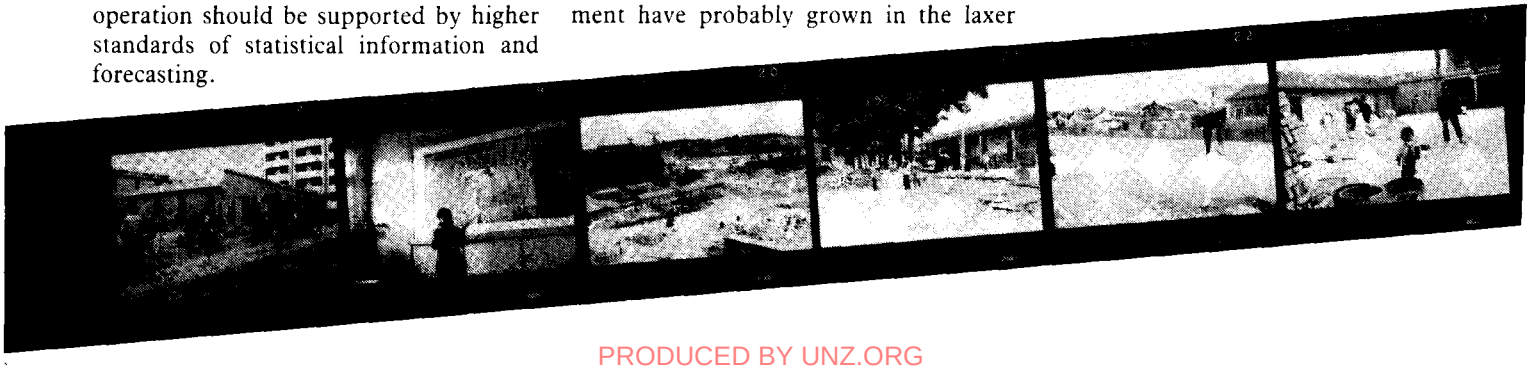
Party leadership may have been more effective in the countryside, but local cadres there carry less weight and have therefore opposed the new reforms less successfully. In the urban areas, party management of industry and commerce is the principal source of patronage and influence for the bureaucracy. Ironically, the opportunities for back-door enrichment have probably grown in the laxer atmosphere induced by the general mood of change. This only increases bureaucratic resistance to change which directly affects their powers and prerogative.

The Central Committee decision makes a careful statement of principle: the state must regulate the activities of its economic enterprises by retaining the power to appoint their managers, to tax their income and where necessary to open or close them down. But these functions of ownership can and should be separated from the power of operation. This should rest in the hands of the managers, with the support of the workforce which has (so the document says) 'the right to participate in democratic management of the enterprise'. The enterprise should become responsible for its own profit and loss, and should be regarded as a legal entity with certain rights and duties. In practical terms this would mean for example that a factory can no longer dodge the payment of compensation for defective products by shifting responsibility to the state administration. And unless it receives a specific pre-arranged state subsidy, it may bankrupt itself if it fails persistently to keep out of the red.

Prices and inflation

(c) Prices and wages. The expectation of higher prices had already led to bulk buying of many staples and sought-after consumer goods while the Central Committee was in session. Most Chinese have grasped that their country is now moving from – as it is explained – 'a low wage and price to a high wage and price economy', and this is widely seen not as a function of particular government policies but as part of the price for modernisation. Indeed it is doubtful whether any policy except the deliberate maintenance of austerity could have averted the inflation already under way, and the unreal prices of many commodities under the present system only encourages this (as well as stimulating the black market).

Reform of the price system, says the Central Committee boldly, is 'the key to reform of the entire economic structure', but it then backs away from the consequ-



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ences by claiming that this should not affect anyone's real income. The justifying argument is a familiar one elsewhere. Any adverse consequences should be compensated for by the general increase of economic efficiency which will result from price reform. 'It must be widely publicised among the people', the document claims, 'that. . . the reform of the price system. . . will never bring about a general and spiralling price rise'.

Finally we come to the question of distribution according to work and the rejection of egalitarianism. Although hedged in with provisos the Central Committeee now gives its approval to a more direct link between performance and remuneration, for the individual worker as well as the enterprise. Workers should have proper contracts, specifying their responsibilities and duties. Wage differentials should be widened so as to 'fully reflect the differences between mental and manual, complex and simple, skilled and unskilled, and heavy and light work'. Workers will also share in the prosperity of their enterprise through the bonus system of which there is now effectively no limit (except that it is subject to a high rate of taxation).

Widening differentials

It is here that the departure from Maoist principles is most marked. The question of differentials – which have always existed – is less important (although they may now be widened now to extremes of polarisation only possible in the past for a few privileged cadres – including Mao himself – at the top end of the scale). What Mao would have objected to above all is the overwhelming importance now attached to material incentives, even though the Central Committee still exhorts people to continue to 'build our country through diligence and thrift'. The implied threat to job security, since inefficient enterprises are likely to go to the wall, also offends the basic guarantee always offered by the state hitherto (at least to urban workers) of some form of employment, however poorly paid.

It is the legitimisation of the get-rich-quick attitude which most concerns perceptive Chinese observers – although it is important to realise that such concern in no way indicates nostalgia for the 'self-less' rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. The truth is that China has lost a set of values belonging more to the 1950s than the 1960s and has failed to find another. People are aware of this without being able to propose a solution. As the reformers themselves acknowledge, China's isolation did have certain positive results although it also encouraged an inward-looking and chauvinistic perspective on the world which they are still trying to overcome.

It would be unfair to present the opposition to the reforms as entirely based upon the defence of privilege and the assertion of outdated slogans. There is also a real fear – which the Central Committee decision acknowledges – that however inefficient centralised planning and management may have been, the alternative in a country of China's size and economic complexity could be chaos. In fact the party is assigned in the document powers of great significance which could place much more responsibility on it than before.

> the modernisation of political life still remains the 'fifth modernisation' which lags behind the four official ones

Without blanket planning powers, it must nevertheless now develop the ability to intervene selectively but effectively when – as the document admits – the extensive growth of competition in the commodity economy leads to 'certain disorder in production'. It must improve its ability to devise realistic medium and long-term planning. Without being involved any longer with individual enterprise management, government and party bodies must now develop the economic conditions in which the autonomous enterprises can flourish. (The document contains a long list of central responsibilities, ranging from the coordination of local development plans to the dissemination of economic information). Selective intervention is specified for cases where 'undesirable trends and unlawful acts may appear' between enterprises. More economic legislation is demanded, and the law courts are told to deal more effectively with economic crimes.

In the sphere of distribution, the state will also be obliged to provide a safety net to 'aid those who have not yet become well-off', and (although this is not said explicitly) to provide for the new unemployed now that the guaranteed job or 'iron rice-bowl' has been 'smashed'. Prices must be allowed to float for many commodities, but only within fixed limits, and the state must ensure that this does not lead to 'a general and spiralling price rise'. A complicated system of tax reductions and exemptions is also suggested in order to help offset the higher cost of raw materials – although industry is supposed to absorb most of this cost by reducing wasteful consumption.

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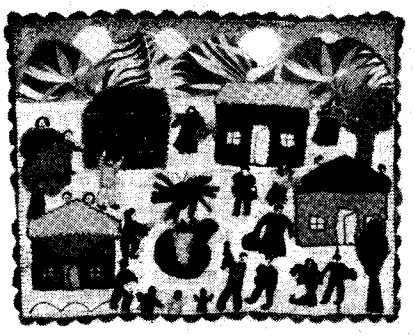
The fifth modernisation

The reforms demand therefore much higher standards of administration and leadership by the Chinese government and party bureaucracies than have been previously achieved. It is not at all clear whether the latest 'rectification' campaign – which has already encountered delay and resistance and was hardly mentioned at the Central Committee plenum – will make much difference.

The modernisation of political life still remains, in the memorable phrase of the dissident Wei Jingsheng (now serving out his sentence for 'counter-revolutionary crimes') the 'fifth modernisation' which lags behind the four official ones.

Yet the modernisation – let alone democratisation – of the bureaucracy must be a lengthy process, in default of which the new reforms may look very different in reality from the well-argued theory which has been approved by the Central Committee.

Some of the problems were emphasised in an important speech by the party general secretary Mr Hu Yaobang early in November. On the one hand he urged the party's middle-level leadership not to 'fall asleep' now that the policy had been approved and let nothing happen. On the other hand he warned them not to let enterprises pursue individual profit at the expense of public benefit, and to guard against damaging inflation. In this sense Mao's insistence that the superstructure – the world of politics and privilege – dominates the way that the productive process is managed – continues to hold true. China needs new managers more than new schemes of management, and the attempt now being made to promote more talented and younger cadres is critical for the future. □



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Labour has been in decline. But renewal is underway. And the GLC is very much part of it.

Left Alive

'Labour & the People' Debate

RENAISSANCE Labour Style

Ken Livingstone

One of the highlights of *Marxism Today*'s Left Alive in November was the discussion between Ken Livingstone and Beatrix Campbell on 'Labour and the People'. The GLC has been one of the most interesting and innovative experiments from the Left in recent years. But what are its strengths and weaknesses? Does it offer a model for renewal of the wider labour movement? Here we publish edited extracts from their contributions at Left Alive.

I DON'T THINK that there are as many lessons to be drawn from the GLC as some people are claiming. A lot has happened there, but in terms of the transformation of the GLC into a popular body, we can't underestimate the fact that more than any other institution the Left has ever got its hands on, the GLC is a mechanism for the redistribution of wealth on a grand scale. A third of everything that we do is paid for by the large offices of central London, which gives me a warm glow every night as I go to sleep. That has put us in a position where we can do much more than any borough council in London can do or Sheffield or Liverpool. There is a scale of wealth denied any other local authority and a scale of staffing expertise which has made it possible to mount the campaign we have. Given the policies we've been following are basically popular, then providing you've got sufficient financial strength to get your message across through the existing media structures, you can get the sort of lead in the polls that we've achieved. Policies would have taken a lot longer to get across if we hadn't had access to that finance.

The real danger in this has been that because we've needed to do something within months, at most within a year, we've had to use a whole range of organs of society which are not labour movement organs. We've been buying space in the media that's run by our enemies. And we've actually circumvented the more long-term building-up of public support that has taken a council like Bologna many postwar decades. So there are a lot of lessons but equally a lot of weaknesses, which haven't yet become apparent and won't do so until some point in the future when we realise that whilst we've become a popular council we haven't built the mass base of support that we should have done.

It's a very shallow level of support in many areas, even though electorally, for example in our GLC by-elections and also spilling over into London borough council elections, we have proved we can win. Indeed, in the same way we've been able to buy the media exposure, that can equally be turned against us by somebody that could spend as much. And in this society most of our enemies can spend as much when they put their mind to it. So we shouldn't get carried away with the idea that all we've got to do is write the lessons of the GLC large.

The Government's weakness

In addition, we've been successful largely because the Government's a lot weaker than many people in our movement perceive. One of the things that depressed me most in the great flurry of interest in Eric Hobsbawm's analysis immediately after the last election was the way that some of the most bankrupt sections in the PLP seized on it because it could provide a justification for their values, rather than looking in detail at what was being said. Now we have got to accept that not only has the Labour Party's position declined dramatically over the last 20 years, but there is also a long-term decline in support for the Tory Party which has been masked by the weakness and debilitation of the labour movement.

We are in a position where this government has been re-elected with 42½% of the vote. That isn't a mandate for a popular right-wing transformation of Britain. It means that something like 29% of the population went out and voted to put this government back in office. And this government knows it's weak. If it felt strong and secure in the way that the Baldwin administration did in 1935, when they'd been re-elected with 55% of the vote, there wouldn't be the need for the quite massive onslaught that Thatcher and her friends have unleashed against key sections of the labour movement. It wouldn't be absolutely essential to smash those Labour councils which are providing an alternative. The Government is moving against local government both by rate capping and by abolition for the same reason it's moving against the miners. It's the weakness of its support and the very shallow depths of its ideological supremacy. The Government knows the problems that are about to face it, and it knows that it doesn't necessarily have the base to survive. We could very well find that within the next year this government is fighting for survival on a scale which was inconceivable in the aftermath of the general election. That shows itself in the split within the Tory Party.

We've had a lobbying firm of people

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An attentive cross-section at the debate between Tony Benn and Stuart Hall.

who work day by day in the Commons and the Lords. Not only do they pump out our information and do everything possible to maximise dissent within both houses of Parliament against the Government's abolition plans. But they act as a feedback of information, and in the run up to the Brighton bombing what was coming back was a remarkable sea-change amongst a lot of ordinary backbench Tory MPs and peers who had started to become extremely worried about the direction in which the monetary swing of the Tory Party was taking the country.

Not in the sense that they disagreed with the long-term direction and objective, but they were worried that the speed and the intolerance with which it was being done was preparing a backlash which could endanger the Government. And quite surprisingly a lot of support was starting to materialise around Peter Walker, who is the most archetypal of the wets. That base of support was markedly bigger than that around a figure like Michael Heseltine. So I believe a major split is coming within the Tory Party from a lot of Tories who are terrified that the way the Government has presented its case, carried it forward, and the conflicts with local government and the miners, are now opening the door to a backlash which could bring to power the sort of radicalised Labour government that they fear above all else.

The miscalculations the Government has made on the miners endanger its life. I think the Government seriously did believe that the miners could be beaten in the space of a few months. Now they face the prospect that we may see a miners' strike going into a second year and that is something that is going to have a major economic impact on Britain, even if nothing else happens. They've yet to discover the exact scale of response there's going to be to rate-capping. Next March and April a whole range of major local authorities and cities could be in industrial upheaval and with a considerable degree of disorder on the streets when the impact of rate-capping hits. If there's still a miners' strike going on at that time, there isn't the scale of resources for policing to be able to cover both those disputes. One of the major factors behind the success of Liverpool Council was the fact that the Government did not want major upheaval and disorder in Liverpool while trying to police the mining communities.

> because we owe £2.5 billion pounds we have a lot of financial advisors!

But the biggest problem faces them across the Atlantic, because now he has been re-elected, Reagan has to do something about the budget deficit. We can anticipate very rapid action in the form of increases in taxes, and major cut-backs in public spending. And that will translate itself into what will probably be the most severe recession we have seen since the Second World War. It will have an impact on every other section of the world economy, but its most acute impact will be here in Britain because monetarist policies have meant a major contraction in our own manufacturing base and a greater dependence of the British economy on oil and on the City of London. But with oil prices likely to fall and less income from financial movements in the world banking system, Britain faces a worse situation than her competitors.

Renewing the Labour Party

What I've just been telling you is not my view, it's not something out of one of those left papers of 15 years ago saying that the great crisis is coming, it's what our financial advisers are telling us at the GLC. And because we owe £2.5 billion pounds we have a lot of financial advisors! That's their optimistic scenario. The pessimistic scenario is that Reagan's grasp of economics is such that they bungle the whole thing and you have a precipitation into something close to the 1929 great crash. That's the scale of potential crisis that is faced. That's why the monetarist wing of the present government realise they need to have a decisive victory over the trade unions and they haven't yet won it; and they need to remove those centres of opposition in the cities which have proved, or begun to prove, so attractive to so many people and a part of the renewal of the Labour Party.

The Labour Party is effectively renewing itself from the grassroots up. Largely a generation that came into politics in the aftermath of 1968 have been getting on to borough councils, county councils, the GLC and actually learning how those sort of things operate, how to use them in the interests of our class and also how to draw lessons out of that. One of the failures of the 1945 Labour Government of which there were many, was the failure of the Left within it. If you go back and read the pamphlets and documents that the Left were writing in 1945-51, there's an incredible naivety about how easy it would be to

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carry through change. A real underestimation of the scale of power that would be wielded by the civil service, by financial institutions, America and everyone else. It really was as though for the first time the labour movement found itself genuinely in office in Britain, and made a lot of major mistakes because of that naivety. That won't be the situation in the present period because we've had a generation of people grow up on the Left seeing not just the failures of the 1945 government but also what went wrong in 1964 and 1974 when, unlike 1945, there were virtually no successes to counterbalance the tremendous run of failures that we had. One of the major reasons behind Thatcher's move to try and break this urban base that the Labour Party's developed is that it is one of the most important areas for the development of a Left that understands what it's doing, which is likely at some point to find itself in central government.

radical left councils are often locked into disputes with their own trade unions

Causes of decline

Now I don't want to skip too lightly over Labour's decline. I think we're all aware of the scale of loss. Given the reasons for it, it was almost inevitable. The Labour Party has been so fundamentally undemocratic for years, authoritarian, unable to listen to people who were outside the top layers of the labour and trade union movement. And it's been a very bad movement at actually taking ideas in from the grass roots, at listening to other people, at listening to the needs of groups that were outside the orthodox labour and trade union movement; it therefore became a very unimaginative and inward-looking small clique. That's been a major problem that we've faced over the last 30 or 40 years within the Labour Party. There wasn't anything happening within it to generate the ideas and activity which would have helped the process of renewal and given it confidence and strength. It just withered away.

The Labour Party is a very centralist party with very centralist traditions. Islington Council, for example, has a radical left reputation and yet its labour relations are such that there has been a long-term industrial dispute. Many of the radical left councils are often locked into disputes with their own trade unions. It often starts because they've made a miscalculation and some faction or grouping seeks to try and exploit that. But then there's an immediate intolerance, the idea that somehow they know best and how can anybody challenge them particularly as they're radical left-wingers. And so there's still a lot to learn and that sort of arrogance is still there even in the parts of the Labour Party currently being renewed by people who've come into politics post-1968.

Those that exercise power have got to accept that that doesn't mean to say they know best, or even that they have a range of information that allows them to make better judgements. And you still see that sort of bureaucratic arrogance reflected in council housing and social service departments. So one of the reasons for our decline is that ordinary people have come along to their council or to a central government department for assistance, when it was run by Labour, and they've been treated with disdain, or arrogance, totally unacceptable attitudes of one kind or another. That has cost the Labour Party a lot of support and it opened the way for the Right to move in and attack bureaucracy as inherently a bad thing, to say it was inherently linked with socialism. They allowed us to develop a very weak flank.

Legacy of Labour governments

The other area very much tied up with our decline is the appallingly poor record of the 1964 and 1974 Labour governments. We know they were all run by social democrats but at least in some other countries the social democrats were able to deliver something: the record of those two governments is mediocre even by social democratic standards. Compare the record of 64/74 against the record of Brandt and Schmidt in Germany, it's appalling. I'm not sure why, possibly it's linked to the very inward looking nature of the leadership of the labour movement in Britain, its elitism and refusal to listen to others outside its immediate ranks. We've also got the major problem that our economic policies, particularly in the 64/74 governments rested on just carving up the growing cake each year. The talk was that there'll be a bit more for everybody and we'll be able to fund all of our programmes without increasing taxation.

The 64/74 Labour governments were elected with very good shopping lists of things to do. But they ended up paying for the services that are needed by the poor and the most dispossessed elements in society by taxing skilled workers. And there isn't the scale of wealth among the skilled workers to justify that. Once again

that has allowed the Right to turn one section of workers against another, the skilled workers against the unskilled. Labour governments can never succeed unless they're prepared to fund their programmes by using the massive financial resources that exist in Britain by controlling the direction of capital.

The ignored sections

Another major problem is that we've had nothing to say in terms of women, black people, lesbians and gay men. For whole sections of society we've occasionally had a policy which has gone some small way, but in retrospect it always looks appallingly poor. I mean we've had an equal pay act which actually made a small difference — women's wages went from 65% average male earnings up to 71-72%. But women's wages have already begun to decline quite severely under this government. We have not just failed to have any policies for women in our society, we haven't actually listened to them, we haven't as a labour movement gone out and said what do we need to do? We haven't looked at how we should change our ways and styles of working so that women can take a full part in terms of policy determination, in terms of holding office, in terms of sharing power.

In its dealings the Left is often as bad as the Right, sometimes a bit worse. We have had nothing to say about women's rights from day one. And while some labour movement speakers now refer to it, we still aren't doing anything about changing the structures of the labour movement so we can transform it, and until we do, we're going to see the majority of women give their support to non-socialist parties at elections because at least those parties operate within a framework of sexism and discrimination which women understand. We pay lip service to doing away with it and yet perpetuate it. Faced with that sort of choice it's not surprising that we haven't been able to win a major increase in support from women.

The same is true in terms of what we've had to say for black people in Britain. In London 15% of the population is black. Their needs are only just beginning to get considered. And the immediate response of the leadership of the labour movement is to say stamp on it, we can't have black sections. What's being asked is that black

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people should be allowed to get together free of the influence of white people, discuss the discrimination they feel, decide how to articulate their demands and then come forward to the movement with proposals for change. And we're frightened of it, absolutely terrified of it. And we then drag up a load of black people who've been sufficiently indoctrinated by white standards in our society to argue against it at Labour Party conference.

I've got notes here that I need to mention pensioners, the disabled, lesbians . . . our record is appalling on all of them. We occasionally do something good for pensioners, because we feel a bit sorry about that, but all it means is giving another 50p or a five-pound bonus at Christmas. We've not looked at how we continue to involve pensioners in the control of society. To conclude, I'd just like to say what I believe needs to be done to tackle this. From what I've indicated about the relationship of the labour movement to women, to black people, to the other groups that we need to bring into it, we have to completely recast the way we operate, our structures and the sort of policies we put forward, and to do it, I believe, as we've done it at the GLC. That is one of the strengths of the GLC.

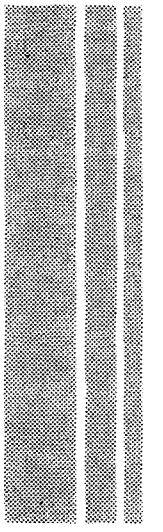
A strength of the GLC

We've actually said to groups outside, tell us what you think. When we came into office we had one black member of the GLC; it was quite wrong to suggest that he should be the voice of black people on the GLC. He has a right to be involved in all the other range of policies and shouldn't be expected to fulfil that role. We therefore established an ethnic minorities unit, we brought in a whole range of people, we set up consultation networks with the black communities in London and that has eventually spread to a whole range of ethnic minorities, not just black ethnic minorities. And they come to us and say what we should do and almost without exception we take that on board and we then carry it out. We didn't go out to the black communities and say we've got a plan for you brothers and sisters, this is going to be wonderful. We said what do you think we can do with the GLC that will assist you? And we've had less success, but still quite a step forward in terms of women, and a quite remarkable success in terms of lesbians and gay men. There'll be some people around who'll say but these aren't groups that are inherently labour movement, and that is really nonsense, that's accepting the registrar-general's definition of class. We're talking about a Marxist definition of class. Those aren't groups that are outside the labour movement.

I've heard people in the Labour Party say to me you lose votes when you give grants to lesbians and to gay men. And that's undoubtedly true. During the by-election in Paddington, about once every couple of days somebody would say to me 'I've voted Labour all my life but I'm not voting for you because of your grants to these lesbians and queers'. There was not much you could do about it actually. What was interesting was that a day didn't go by in which two or three people didn't come up to me and say 'I've never voted Labour in my life before but as a gay man or as a lesbian what your council has done for us means I'm voting Labour this time'. There are a whole range of groups of people we can reach in society when we start to have something to say for them.

One of the reasons we're so far ahead in the polls in London is that literally hundreds of thousands of people who have never voted Labour in their lives, never had any commitment to public spending in the way that we would have, suddenly saw that our fares policy made sense for them. And people that have been Tory commuters for years think the GLC is something worth saving. If we are serious about transforming society, and we recognise you can't do it on 42% of the vote if you're Thatcher, you certainly won't do it on 42% of the vote if you're a socialist party. You've got to think in terms of winning a majority of society behind your demands. And reaching groups of the community that we've not reached before.

I'm not at all pessimistic about the future. There are terrible dangers in the period immediately ahead but equally there is the chance of actually defeating this government and electing the sort of Labour government that we've waited too long to see. If we can get close to winning the next election, or actually win it, I believe that you will see a completely different PLP, because half will be new people, largely coming from the hard left and the soft left. Its election will give people confidence and the pressures that will build up on that government I believe will move it in the right direction. There's everything to fight for in the coming years and we have the prospect of electing a government we can actually be proud of before the end of this decade but it starts by us saying amongst ourselves we have the confidence and the will to reach out and take power. If we don't exude that confidence and even if we don't believe we can do it, we won't be given the chance.



Full marks to th ambiguities. The within the Left,

POL

I want to do something which is extremely difficult: to agree and *disagree* with Ken. A lot of people would regard this as an extremely eccentric thing to try to do. However, the things I'm going to argue with him about, are things that he hasn't referred to, of course. They're familiar, though, because we've argued about them before – endlessly. So, a little bit about the GLC first, then the implications for the Labour Party nationally, and then other issues which are outside that frame of reference. These are about what the movement(s) for socialism are going to look like – or rather, *who* it's going to look like as we approach the end of the century.

The London Labour Left has tried to grapple with an electoral concept: the alliance of the dispossessed. The Labour Party nationally, both right and left, haven't addressed the issue. But we all know that the fight is on for the socialist movement. This is usually represented as being between what the Labour Party/movement imagine to have been a traditional working class base and marginal middle class interlopers.

Neither of us share this view and both of us would probably agree that one of our problems is that the socialist movement has been reduced to a men's movement which has produced myopic, minimalist, self-centred (ie, male chauvinist) and conservative forms of class struggle. The argument is not about abandoning class struggle, but about reclaiming it and renewing it.

Furthermore we would also agree that politics is not solely located in workplaces – some of the most disruptive challenges have emerged outside the labour movement, that is about sexuality as well as about surplus value. Ken is unusual as a Labour politician: a steadfast socialist who doesn't flinch from the Left, who cares

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ɪLC. Here is a new kind of politics. There are e limitations. But in the context of the wider struggle elongs on the side of renewal against born-again fundamentalism.

Left Alive

'Labour & the People' Debate

ΓICS, Pyramids ıd People

Beatrix Campbell

about Irish nationalism and about sexual politics – and he's successful.

My criticisms are about his concept of alliances.

not without stern scrutiny from our godfathers

The GLC's innovations

So, to the GLC: what's fascinating about the GLC and the changes in the Labour Party in London is the way in which it's popular; because it's done something apparently extraordinary which is to actually honour its promises to expand fairly basic services which are really very little to do with socialism, though they are associated with the long tradition of socialist municipalism in Britain. The GLC has secured a terrific bedrock of goodwill because people think 'ah well, they're honest and they will do what they say they'll do, they will cut the fares!' It doesn't have to be socialism to make us happy, a cut in the bus fares makes us happy. We all were, weren't we?

But there was another extraordinary moment in the early 80s when the GLC gathered support around its grants policy: redistributing resources to areas of the voluntary sector. There was this mighty GLC machine negotiating with people whose relationship to political institutions, and to town hall politics particularly, had historically been a relationship of *dis*organisation. And alienation. For feminism, and the black movement, the existence of the GLC and that grants strategy had a number of very important effects.

First of all, an army of poor political movements and groups servicing women and children found a relationship to institutional politics on a large scale with lots of money. That meant resources being allocated to movements and organisations exiled from those institutions. So this was a real monument to Rudi Dutschke's notion of the long march through the institutions. More than that, this relationship was an expression of many people's dependence on the state which didn't suppress their disaffection and anxiety about statism and past bad practises. Functions were organised, carried out, by people themselves supported and resourced by the state machine. This policy empowered people to organise themselves because it provided the resources without taking away the experience of bargaining for resources, the skills of organising those functions themselves, organising services, workplaces, nurseries.

A model for the future?

But is it a model for the future? In several senses, yes. Firstly, because it doesn't involve abandoning the local state, in the face of a central state offensive against both the local state and public provision as such. Secondly, because that policy married the voluntary sector the local state in a period of mass discontent with the welfare state – a discontent with the *form* of its organisation rather than the principle of public provision. That alliance between the voluntary sector (dependent on state funding) and the state sector, has proved to be critical in mobilising against abolition of the GLC and metropolitan authorities. Thirdly, this policy has extended the reach of the local state into the community, particularly among women, at a point when central government has been dedicated to its erosion.

Finally, the expansion of resources into the community has involved, in the case of the GLC, *empowering* people rather than taking away the skills of organisation from the clients. If the many groups whose functions are contingent on securing GLC funding are dependent, it is only as financial claimants. It is they who have brought to the GLC and to the community skills learned through years of political practice. Indeed, to secure the funds in the first place, they have had to verify their credentials. A plethora of skills, both 'practical' and 'political', have thus found their way into County Hall and out again.

We are talking about literally hundreds of organisations performing concrete services, making concrete products, which would have gone to the wall if they hadn't been bankrolled by the GLC. I speak from practical experience. I work for *City Limits*, a magazine which is successful, expanding and profitable. We tried exhaustively, and failed, to secure capital from capitalist institutions. Despite an exemplary track record, we failed. British capitalist institutions, despite Thatcherism's rhetoric about small businesses, just won't risk providing the money. The GLC did. So we thrive – though not without stern scrutiny from our godfathers.

But is it a model for parliamentary practice? No, or at least not yet. Because the lesson of local government is that it can make resources directly available in a way that parliament can't. If anything, the GLC experience has proved how local government is vital to the voluntary sector

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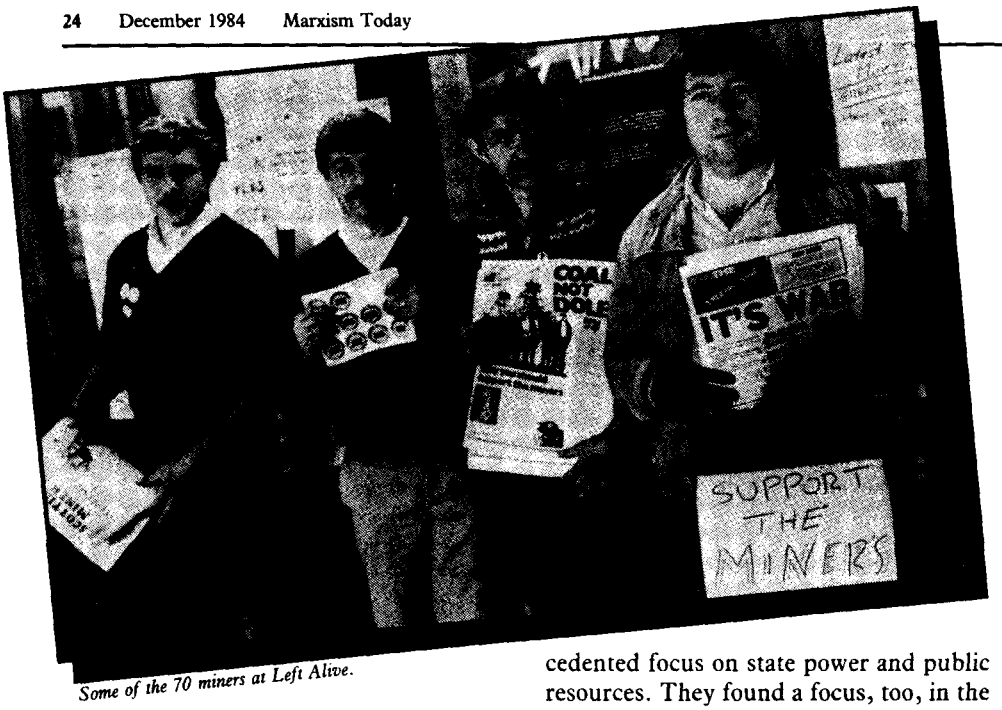

Some of the 70 miners at Left Alive.

as a direct resource, and consequently illuminates a prospectus for local democracy which brings together the expertise of bureaucracy and community practitioners.

The political inspiration of the project

Furthermore, the experiment is rooted in the history of the Labour administration at County Hall in the 80s. What happened was the Left reached ascendancy in the Labour Party before and immediately after the election which defeated the Tory Cutler regime. A *coup d'etat* took place. Which was great. The prelude to this was the political work done outside the Labour Party for a decade, which didn't necessarily find expression in the personnel of the Labour Party itself, but did find expression in the manifestos and policies of the party. It was there that the basis was constructed for this new relationship. What we have is a large miscellaneous non-aligned Left in London which has been beavering away for 10 or 15 years, not least because one of its problems has been the Labour Party. Many of their struggles, expecially around housing, represented a popular feeling of crisis among many ordinary working class people in the inner city areas in their relationship to their party. That critique was affirmed to some extent in the new directions of the GLC. But the new relationship that was being struck as the money was negotiated was one between the Labour Party and that miscellany of non-aligned radicals and activists. They had fuelled some of the politics of the Labour Party itself, which – unlike them – had access to the state machine. So, many of these non-aligned constituencies now found an unprecedented focus on state power and public resources. They found a focus, too, in the Labour Party, and the Labour Party found itself with a new political constituency – one that was organised, active, and radical, that was banging on the doors waiting to get in.

That tells us something else, then, about the nature of the GLC's popularity. On the one hand there is a huge passive and pacified body of loyal support for the GLC rekindled by the policies it has adopted. And on the other hand, active, radical political constituencies, which found a place in County Hall, and some of which have also found a place in the Labour Party. Some of these, it must be said, have been refugees from other bits – smaller bits – of the Left which have gone into decline since the 60s and early 70s. At the parliamentary level, the Labour Party has still not recuperated a confident, traditional loyalty. And it certainly has not given any authentic expression to the priorities and practices of the ever-expanding non-aligned Left in Britain.

> *empowering* people rather than taking away the skills of organisation from the clients

The lost masses

Let's return, though, to the metropolitan level. The strength of the GLC's encounter with radicalism is that it has brought to the Labour Party initiatives beyond its own imagination and beyond its own doing. And it has brought to that encounter skills of administration, often very bold and creative, beyond the skills of local activists. They're in a symbiotic relationship to each other. Though both represent people who are into organised politics. But they still barely touch the political – or depoliticised – existence of the mass of people in London who travel on buses and whose experience of the GLC begins and ends with the fare. They are, of course, touched by the kind of razzmatazz which controversy around the GLC has introduced into all our lives – it has changed the political universe in which Londoners live. The capital has been politicised. Consequently, Ken saying things like 'well, we're all bisexual aren't we?' may scandalise an awful lot of white heterosexual bewildered citizens, but at least it puts the issue on to their own political agenda. And it puts the cultural revolution happening in civil society into the political arena.

But what isn't achieved yet is a political space in which ordinary people are going to find themselves actually beginning to be *activists* as well. We have a Labour Party now dependent on the non-aligned Left, which is into sexual politics, the politics of race, radical housing and environmental politics, etc. And activists in those arenas have a conduit to the local state through a radicalised Labour Party. But there is still a pessimistic, demoralised and terribly isolated mass of the voting public. They may vote Labour, but how are they to find their way into *active* politics? And none of these people know where to find either of this lot I've been talking about. Save at County Hall. This matters. Because the Labour Party is their party, too. But is it a conduit for them?

This brings us to a more general problem for the Labour Party and the labour movement in their relationship with their own historic base. Housing is a useful example of that problem. I use it deliberately because housing is not something that the GLC has to worry about. The GLC was spared that responsibility by the previous regime removing it to the boroughs. It has thus been spared a lot of aggravation that would have tarnished its magnificent reputation if it were indeed in the same position as your average socialist municipality. Housing, indeed, is the clue to the difference. It's not just about the relative impoverishment of, say, Sheffield as against London. The crucial thing is what are the effects of their differential responsibilities? When we look at the other socialist eldorados we see the same old mess being reproduced, as ever was. The same kind of bad practice in relation to the people who these councils employ. Employees of Sheffield's housing department are out on strike at the moment. Nursery workers struck in Islington and they are on

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strike in Bolton, too, – ie, they were being badly treated by a bad employer. None of them, including the socialist republic of Sheffield, have exemplary records as employers, nor as landlords.

Spared the aggravation

Housing may be the one instance where the average person experiences politics. It may be the issue that brings them into contact with a councillor. But the average council tenant's experience of either a councillor or an official whether it's in crummy old Bermondsey or in socialist eldorado is much the same. Liverpool, now run by a left Labour administration, has dumped support for the city's extraordinary new-build housing co-ops and plans to throw up thousands of dwellings already suspected of being the slums of the future. Bad housing policies have corroded the whole principle of collective, public provision. What is going to happen to public housing in London? This is very important to an awful lot of working class people because it's not just a matter of need, it's a matter of a political argument about the collective and democratic provision of a basic need being won or lost. It is an argument that's rooted in ordinary people's direct experience of the undemocracy of the democratic institutions that are supposed to represent them. County Hall was spared all that aggravation because it isn't responsible for housing.

Back to the point. So, having created a new base for activists estranged from the traditions of Labourism, the GLC doesn't yet adequately represent the material needs of people who are traditional Labour voters. Maybe that's not its fault. But other authorities have those responsibilities and they are culpable. There is another dimension to this argument. Is Labour in London following through the logic of the politics represented by the new social forces? The answer lies in concepts designed to describe the new alliance between them and the Labour Party.

tawdry far left elitism dressed up as a kind of new popular intervention in politics

The promiscuous alliance

To find some clues, let's refer to a new book, *Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher?* It was very interesting, no, it really wasn't very interesting, but it was very instructive. It is a series of interviews between Ken and Tariq Ali. I didn't want to read this book, I have to be honest. Ken says that was for sectarian reasons and he's absolutely right. The other reason I didn't want to read it was that I thought I would be bored. And I was. And the reason it was boring was because the things that make Livingstone interesting are not there. And they're not part of it for very good reasons, because the boring bits of Ken Livingstone is what's in this book. Not least because of this promiscuous alliance with Tariq Ali.

This is Tariq Ali's introduction to the book, after talking about 1968, which was of course his moment, 'What can be said

The creche.

Left Alive

'Labour & the People' Debate

with certainty is that a serious socialist project in Britain requires a fusion of the theoretical reach and grasp of a wide layer of Marxists (like myself, he means –BC) with the practical skills, abilities and courage of leaders able to communicate with millions such as Benn, Scargill and Livingstone'. The Three Musketeers. What this amounts to is tawdry far left elitism, dressed up as a kind of new popular intervention in politics. Actually, it's *New Left Review* coming out of its closet and muscling in on a successful act. Tariq Ali's injunction is really the rehabilitation of an old formula for political organisation. It was invented a long time ago, but a recent exponent was Ernest Mandel, who wrote a classic Trotskyist pamphlet about political parties, or *the* party.

It's a pyramid of course, vanguards always are, and at the top there are very, very few people. The praetorian guard of the vanguard party, who are schooled. In fact probably they went to the best schools. Underneath it you've got the next layer with whom it is vital, according to Mandel, for these top people to communicate. They don't think terribly well, they've got a good line in jokes and good colloquial quips in the idiom of the masses, but essentially they are not intellectuals. And these people, practical activists, like Ken, are 'leaders of men' who are to be the medium through which the praetorian guard communicates with the sleeping beauties, the masses awaiting their prince.

This notion of the vanguard goes against everything that I've just been talking about, against the very thing that is interesting about the GLC which is that it gave resources to poor bits of popular politics that were already engaged in changing the material conditions in which people lived. For instance, half the budget of the women's committee, several million pounds, is spent on nurseries for children. That changes something in the lives of millions of *women* in London in ways that the Three Musketeers and Mandel frankly haven't. Tariq Ali's cameo vision of a new relationship between the theoreticians, the brains, and the stars, the brawn, of the labour movement is hardly surprising. Much of the far Left has jumped ship from small vanguards to join a bigger one.

Realignments on the Left

What I don't understand is why this

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conversation between Ali and Livingstone is happening at all, because what's at stake actually is that despite Ken's disavowal of sectarianism the book tries to recruit him to a deeply sectarian project. There is a new alliance being drawn on the Left, and it is one that deliberately undermines the kind of alliance I described at the beginning. If Ken and Ken's allies participate in the creation of this new alliance they will be implicated in it and in its consequences. What we're seeing is that the very *critique* of the old mainstreams of Labourist chauvinism embodied in that first alliance that I referred to, is being suppressed, and dissolved, in another alliance happening somewhere else, between the old Trotskyist far Left, the Labour Party hard Left, and sectarians within the Communist Party. Basically, they want to rehabilitate a view of politics and class struggle which is unreconstructed. Tony Chater put it rather brilliantly I thought in the *Morning Star* recently, it's about a broad democratic alliance with at its heart the industrial working class, meaning its industrial core. (Meaning men). I wouldn't mind so much if it involved an authentic feel for modern politics. But it doesn't. It is often a self-regarding and self-defensive refusal, by men with their hands on our political machine, to face the cultural revolutions happening in British politics and within the working class over recent decades.

Tony Chater manipulates the miners' strike to argue that it shows how 'no credibility can be given' to ideas he then misrepresents. 'Stressing the leading role of the organised working class is not meant to disparage or belittle the contribution of other movements', he says. I assume he's including the GLC. He's certainly including feminism and the peace movement. But before we're under any illusions, he reminds us that 'these various movements did not succeed in posing a serious and sustained challenge to the existence of the Tory government.'

The changing structure of employment, away from manufacturing and extractive industries is also beside the point, he says. The lads are still where it is at. There may be a majority of workers in services and the public sector, but the 'issue is not one of numbers, but position occupied in the economic system, the degree of trade union organisation and the extent of traditionally evolved class understanding.'

The miners' strike stymies any critique of the labour movement, he argues: there is no case for downgrading the leading role of its 'industrial core'. By which he means men. And his argument assumes, of course, that by simply stating that peace is a *class* question, etc, then so it must be. The point is that 'class struggle' as we know it did not create the peace movement. And class exploitation cannot explain men's sexual subordination of women. Furthermore, he may think they are class questions, but much of the labour movement doesn't. And their legitimacy as progressive movements is not necessarily contained in the concept of class. I mention all this because the struggle taking place inside the Communist Party clarifies differences throughout the Left, and clarifies the *meaning* of the new, sectarian alliance which crosses the boundaries of the far Left, the Communist Party and the Labour Party.

Alliance of the dispossessed

That kind of left born again fundamentalism is really about hanging on to a position of power in the broad socialist movement which is increasingly besieged. And it must feel wonderful actually for people like Kinnock to know that he has pals on the far Left and among Tribunites and pals among the so-called 'Stalinists' who basically agree with him when it comes to feminism, blacks and queers. They share the same culture. They share the same way of life, they share the same assumptions about what the working class is, who and what is important within it. They are certainly not about reflecting on 'This Great Movement of Ours', or rather theirs, as part of our collective problem. And

> much of the far Left has jumped ship from small vanguards to join a bigger one

that's why I think that Ken's position has a duplicity in it, forgive me for saying so. On the one hand Ken honourably affirms what the cultural revolution of the last 15 years has been about, because it's what he's about too, and on the other hand remains silent about what the fundamentalists are up to. The fundamentalists are opposed to the changes in the balance of forces within and without the working class, within and without the socialist movement. And they are opposed to any notion of alliances which disturbs *their* power. Indeed the very idea of alliances confuses and disturbs them.

There is a concept which, I think, illustrates a problem, too, in the way that Ken thinks about alliances — the concept of the alliance of the dispossessed. It's a very attractive concept, one that Ken's been associated with, and yet it's a problem. Why? First of all, who are the dispossessed? The term is intended to describe categories of people dispossessed of politics. But they are groups with different experiences. The feminist movement, for example, is learning the hard way that such a notion cannot suppress the differences experienced by black and white, able bodied and disabled, working class and middle class women. If they share something, it is that they have been excluded from the means of organisation, the machinery of politics, by the men's movement which has hijacked the labour movement. Our problem is that capital has seized the means of production and the men's movement has seized the means of organisation.

There's only maybe one thing that they share and that is that they are not like white, able bodied, heterosexual men. So what that description does is to immunise their experience from differences, and if you like, to immunise that white Western men there from this critique. What I'm driving at is that you can't have it both ways, you can't be silent about the problem of mainstream Labourism and affirm the interests of this thing called the alliance of the dispossessed. And although no doubt Ken would deny that that's what he's doing, he is participating in an alliance which is trying to rehabilitate very battered notions of what class struggle is. But even having said that, dispossession no longer adequately describes our condition. Having been denied the machinery of the mainstream, we have built our own movements. We are not absolutely powerless. It is precisely because we have asssembled new political weight that we constitute a force to be reckoned with and we are contesting the possession of the labour movement. We want to re-possess politics. You can't have it both ways. You can't simply adopt movements like feminism without following the logic of their challenge.

Finally, alliances are not simply about arithmetic – aggregating groups of people, regarded as minorities, adding them up so that they become a majority. That view of alliances reduces politics to electoral arithmetic. Alliances are political processes which transform the constituent parts in their encounter with each other. They are political dialogues in which the constituent parts become both collective agents for change and also the subjects of change.

For many women, participation in poli-

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tical parties is about access to politics as the condition of their own transformation from a subordinate sex to an insubordinate sex, just as class struggle is the means of working class people leaving their condition as a subordinate class. It is about intervening in life. But for many women, participation in political parties is also about an alliance with men in order to transform men and masculinity.

The Labour Party and politics

Alliances are about much more than electoral pacts, they are about making encounters in which we are changed. The Labour Party still seems unable to contemplate politics as anything other than electoral pacts. They aren't alone in this. But in the context of the Labour Party, discussion of alliances tends to be simply a modification of party chauvinism. The Labour Party wants all these movements to move on to their territory, they don't want to move on to other's territory. And we fall into this trap when we talk about the future of the Labour Party only by talking about the Labour Party – as if it were the only place where politics happens. Actually it is one of the places where not a lot of politics seems to have happened.

Even here, we affirm Labour Party chauvinism, and indeed labour movement chauvinism which I'm certainly heir to, by talking about the Labour Party when we're talking about the future of the Labour Party. Maybe one of the things we also need to do is imagine a future for the Labour Party which is about when it stops being a jealous god that hangs on to its right to speak for all of the working class. There is life after the Labour Party. It hasn't clocked the fact that all sorts of ingenious forms of politics have been created outside itself, which it depends on. It has to change its attitude to itself and to political forces outside itself. That is not to say that you abandon the mainstream, that you abandon men, and that you abandon the Labour Party. It is simply to say that different terms operate between the Labour Party and the rest of the Left now and must operate if socialism is to have any future at all in this society.

> a self-regarding and self-defensive refusal, by men with their hands on our political machine

In the Tariq Ali book you share the fundamentalists' attack on Eric Hobsbawm's attempt to extend the debate about the renewal of socialism beyond the inner-party contest between the Right and the Left. I don't think he's got it entirely right, but Hobsbawm's opponents represent an assault not only on Hobsbawm's questions – which are *valid* – but on the efforts of people like you to renew the Left. Indeed, Ken, too, has agreed with Hobsbawm's critique of left sectarianism in the inner-party struggle.

Feminism is part of that movement for socialist renewal on new terms. We are describing new terms in the alliance between men and women. And the terms are: the reform of men and the men's movement. Our challenge is against the historic compromise between the class enemy and labouring men over women, against patriarchy and all the cross-class chauvinisms whcih have been the ruination of socialism. Ken can't have it both ways. He can't support us and enjoy our support of him and at the same time give aid to those men of the Left who oppose us – and him. □

Left Alive

'Labour & the People' Debate

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The Keynesian model is dead. Mc say about the US. It's up to

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IN CHARACTERISTIC language Mrs Thatcher recently attempted to portray the miners and the labour movement as Luddites. She accused them of wanting a 'museum society' where no pit or factory would ever close and technology would be frozen forever in its existing forms. This brilliant flash of rhetoric reasserted the claims of the radical Right to be the champions of economic change. The release of market forces, in this view, will drive our system forward by eliminating obsolete methods of production and accelerating modernisation of products and technologies.

Of course, Mrs Thatcher's enthusiastic vision of change is rather a long way from actual economic trends in Britain, where investment and research spending remain seriously depressed, where export performance remains inadequate and where unemployment has resumed a steady upward drift. There is also an interesting contrast between the Prime Minister's optimism and the increasingly sober economic assessments of her Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson. Mr Lawson's gloomy, but plausible, views on employment prospects have made him sound more like someone adapting to failure than prophesying success.

In some respects, Mr Lawson even seems to be trying to slow change down rather than speed it up. He has cut back grants and other incentives for capital investment, apparently in the fear that more investment and faster technical change in British industry would destroy even more jobs without adding much to output. This pessimism hardly suggests a bold rejection of the 'museum society'.

Nevertheless, if many people have tended to accept very high levels of unemployment, that is largely because unemployment and other aspects of the economic crisis, such as large numbers of company failures, have been presented as the price of economic progress. Persistent economic failure may be gradually undermining these free-market ('neo-liberal') claims to bring about overdue changes in our economic structure, but such views have by no means lost their political appeal.

In other countries besides Britain, 'free-market' conservatism – informed by neo-liberal economic doctrines – has also had considerable political success in appropriating the theme of economic progress; market competition is presented as the most powerful mechanism for adapting and modernising economic structure; the innovating capitalist or 'entrepreneur' is portrayed as the key instrument of such change and the source of the 'real jobs' of the future. As President Reagan's re-election shows, this is especially true of the United States – the home of much neo-liberal thinking and a country which tends to be taken as a model by the radical Right in Europe. And in the US the free-marketeers can point to some substantial signs of success: both a long-term growth of employment which contrasts markedly with Western Europe and the startlingly strong economic recovery of the last two years. The US, it is argued, is a case of effective adjustment of economic structure through the working of the free market.

Many of the recent struggles of the labour movement have been concerned, above all, with resistance to neo-liberal *methods* of bringing about economic change. Rightly and inevitably the movement has been preoccupied with the fight against the procedures of closure and foreclosure, redundancies and privatisation. But the continuing need for resistance to these methods can leave a dangerous gap when it comes to the longer run issues of the need for industrial restructuring and economic renewal. This article discusses a basic weakness in the Right's claim that its policies accelerate economic restructuring and suggests some corresponding opportunities for a left economic perspective.

The past: inflation and an obsolete growth model

Although neo-liberal economic doctrines have been maintained by small numbers of enthusiasts for 40 years, neo-liberal theory only became politically relevant from the late 60s as it began to identify some of the emerging limits to the existing structure of western economies. As a result, the radical Right was able to anticipate some of the growing economic and political tensions.

This was particularly the case with the issues of money and inflation. Not that neo-liberals have shown any keen grasp of monetary technicalities – the reverse is the case; in both Britain and the US the detailed monetary management of the radical Right has been a catalogue of major errors. But at a more general level, there was an understanding of how, in the 70s, inflation was linked to the failure of previously successful political/economic strategies. And this failure threatened the political groups who operated the strategies, the centrist political elites that had presided over the boom years of the 60s and over the social compromises which both reflected and underpinned the rapid rates of economic growth achieved in those years.

The Right perceived, as did many on the Left, that the existing 'growth model' – the relatively stable pattern of economic advance, within a specific institutional framework – was beginning to break down. Without entering into a detailed discussion, one can indicate some of the main characteristics of the postwar 'growth model' which involved both specific types of production and appropriate modes of economic control.

The 'dynamo' of economic growth was

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provided by the expansion of key manufacturing industries, particularly motor cars and consumer durables; other sectors were stimulated by this expansion. Expenditure was focused on the products of these key industries by new consumer needs, related to smaller family units and more dispersed housing.

The work disciplines required by such production, repetitive, assembly-line operations, are particularly arduous. Discipline was secured through a relatively

stable settlement between employers and powerful trade unions which, however, accepted the basic pattern of economic advance. This social compromise was cemented by a clear line of technical advance which, particularly in the leading sectors, permitted regular increases in productivity. The unions translated productivity gains into a steady advance of wages and mass purchasing power, thus matching the growth of incomes to the expansion of productive potential.

Another key factor in the control of growth was an increasingly concentrated industrial structure which allowed enterprises to manipulate, but also to stabilise, price systems. Large-scale state expenditure absorbed many of the stresses of this kind of growth while guaranteeing the steady expansion of demand which underlay the whole process.

Some such list of factors, it would be widely agreed, characterised the postwar expansion of advanced 'welfare' capitalism. In retrospect, it is also clear that this growth model began to exhaust its possibilities during the 70s: a key aspect of this impending obsolescence was the productivity slow-down which had appeared in virtually all western economies by 1975. At first the slow-down was treated as a transient, cyclical, phenomenon. Only gradually was it recognised as arising from deep rooted problems in the whole growth process.

The collapse of the growth model, and of its central component – productivity advance in manufacturing industry – brought about massive economic problems at the same time as it tended to undermine the social compromise between organised labour and large scale industry. The efforts of governing parties and economic administrators to cope with these problems resulted in inflation. This was because the economic policy of the 70s, following the practice of the 60s, was to relax the financial pressures on enterprises and sectors which were under pressure. This was done by making credit easier and widening government budget deficits to make it easier for the sectors in trouble to refinance themselves.

However, because the radical nature of the problems was underestimated, this policy of monetary expansion was not accompanied by effective action to alter the real structure of the economy. The governments of most western countries were, through the 70s, the victims of their own previous success. They encouraged increased spending in the economies; but without structural change, this spending fed price increases rather than revived economic growth. An awareness of this developmental impasse was expressed in the monetarist doctrines of the radical Right and leaders like Mrs Thatcher made political capital out of increased inflation. Monetarist theories have, at times, grossly over-simplified the inflationary process; but these themes proved persuasive because behind them was a more accurate perception of the broad issues of economic development than was shown by many of the existing 'Keynesian' leaderships.

The failure of spontaneous regeneration

The argument so far has recognised some important strengths in neo-liberal thinking: the radical Right was able to pose the questions of structural economic change and the need for renewal in a very effective way. However, neither in theory nor in practice has this advantage led on to the definition and construction of a new model of economic development, which could be a viable successor to the now obsolete model. It could be said that the strengths of the 'free-market' doctrine have proved to be largely negative: an impressive critique of previous patterns of state intervention and control has not been matched by corresponding creative powers. Central to this failure is the fact that neo-liberalism relies excessively on private investment to bring about structural change and economic recovery.

In making this point,there is no intention to parody neo-liberal thinking or to present it as a revival of nineteenth century laissez-faire. Clearly state interventions and policy initiatives of many kinds are vital aspects of the neo-liberal agenda. There is no simple cult of spontaneous developments – indeed the neo-liberals are often suspicious of spontaneity in society.

Nevertheless, it remains true that neo-liberal hopes for a sustainable economic recovery do rest, to a very great extent, on the spontaneous production and investment initiatives of private business. The aim of many of the policy initiatives of the radical Right – in Britain, continental Europe and the US – is precisely to bring about conditions where private 'entrepreneurial' business activity can flourish.

A key weakness in these notions of recovery and renewed development through the private sector lies in the area of *finance*. The breakdown of an overall growth model and the difficult transition to a new pattern of development involve massive uncertainties for private investment. Which lines of technical advance will prove to be the most important?

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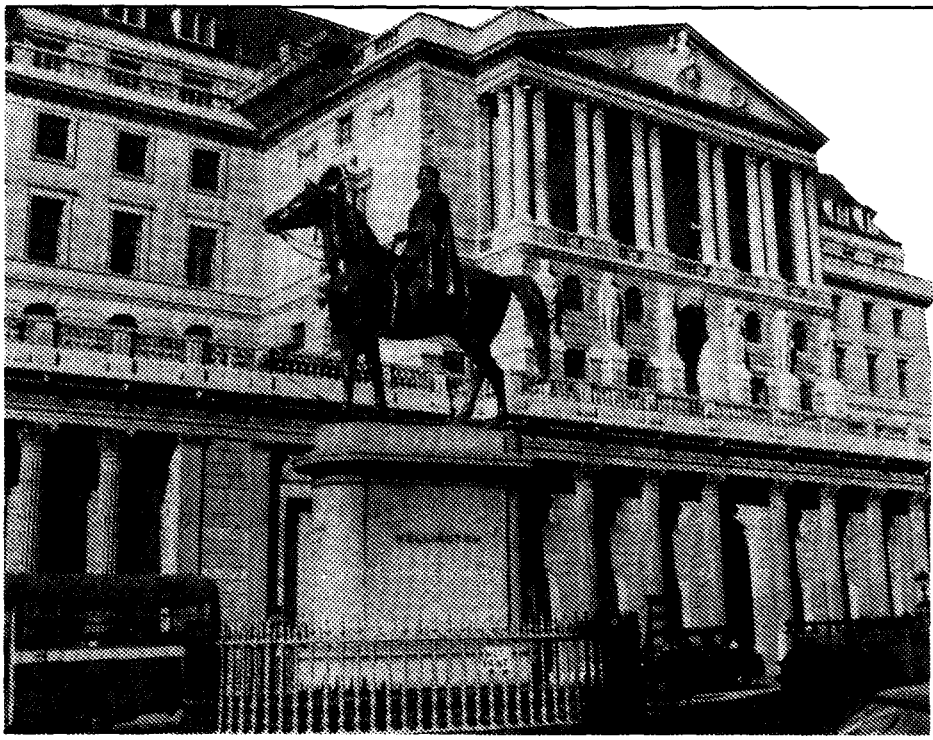

Where will the leading sectors be? The lack of clear anwers to such questions adds enormously to the risks for investment. The consequence tends to be turbulence on financial markets and very tight credit, as private wealth-owners become preoccupied with security and reluctant to make long-run commitment.

One good example is the field of international trade and investment. The postwar growth model was associated with strong hierarchical organisation of international economic relations, centred on the United States and the dollar. The breakdown of the model has created massive uncertainties about future trade, reflected in very unstable rates of exchange between currencies. In turn, the sharp ups and downs of exchange rates have discouraged trade and long-run investment in production for foreign markets.

Within Britain, there are major problems for right-wing economic strategy arising from financial tensions, high rates of interest, and a consequent lack of long-run investment. On the one hand, financial tensions are a key weapon in the right-wing strategy – it is financial pressure which forces change and adaptation on the system. This is partly why Mrs Thatcher's government deliberately raised interest rates and squeezed credit in 1979.

> Mr Lawson . . . adapting to failure rather than prophesying success

However, the British government is now increasingly concerned with the effects of persistently high interest rates on investment and growth. They would like very much to relax credit conditions but international financial forces make this difficult. The outcome is that the need for short-run financial solvency is dominating decision-taking in a dangerous way.

The key example is the alarming abandonment of huge areas of manufacturing industry, where closures forced by short-run financial pressures are leaving the field wide open for overseas competition. It is certainly true that existing manufacturing industry will in the future provide a much smaller share of total employment and that industries such as motor cars will never again be the dynamo of overall growth. But the complete scrapping of whole industrial sectors – with all the skills, expertise and productive capacity they possess – is a complete distortion of the kinds of change that are needed. It happens because extreme financial pressures have shortened the time period over which businesses are able to plan.

It is necessary to stress that these financial tensions are not preventing structural change or producing economic stagnation. Major shifts are taking place in the British economy – for example, in the location of employment, the relative size of different sectors, patterns of consumption. It is true, nonetheless, that private investment and research spending are at low levels and that such investment as is taking place has a defensive, short-run character – focused on rationalisation, not growth. Financial disturbances arising out of system-wide uncertainty tend both to distort and retard the transition to a sustainable pattern of advance. This-makes for serious weaknesses in the economic strategy of the radical Right and, potentially, opportunites for a left interventionist strategy, if it can focus on correcting and accelerating this transition to a new model of economic development.

The United States as a model?

The argument so far is that neo-liberal strategies for economic restructuring, because of their excessive reliance on spon-

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taneous market forces, are handicapped by the caution and defensiveness of private investment. The record of monetarist and free-market policies in Western Europe is certainly consistent with this view. No sign of self-sustaining, cumulative recovery is on the horizon: the only restructuring that has been achieved is of a negative kind – the closing down of loss-making companies and the curtailment of loss-making activities.

By contrast, in the United States it is possible to claim that neo-liberal remedies are working. The US has long been the source of much neo-liberal thinking; to the extent that the radical Right in Europe has any vision of the future, they have derived it from the US experience. In the 60s however, the economic performance of the US hardly seemed enviable – rates of growth were well below those of Europe. The crisis of recent years has reversed this position, with the US economy equalling European rates of growth and providing a much larger number of new jobs. And since 1982 there has been a dramatic recovery and boom in the United States. Neo-liberals have been able to argue that under the market-oriented policies of President Reagan – reduced tax rates and elimination of controls on business – the private sector is delivering a massive growth of output and employment.

To what extent is the radical Right justified in seeing the US as a successful new model of development? It is necessary to recognise that the US does have important developmental advantages, both in its continuing technological lead and in the emergence of new patterns of consumer demand. It was here that the postwar growth model first started to break down; as early as the late 60s productivity growth in the US slowed as the previous pattern of investment reached the limits of its potential. But because of this, the US economy has had a longer period in which to begin the transition to a new model of development, less dependent on the expansion of the previous leading sectors. This is one reason for the more rapid increase in employment in the US – the economy as a whole is less tied to the key sectors of the past, such as automobiles.

It is also true that the very powerful play of market forces in the US – the intense pressure of competition in the labour market, the extreme violence of recent recession – has accelerated some transitional processes while at the same time introducing enormous waste and distortion. It has not proved possible in general for the relatively weak US labour movement to resist the changes imposed by market forces; this has made recent structural change a very ruthless process.

In spite of these factors, however, it is unlikely that there has yet been a fundamental redirection of the US economy towards sustainable development. Rather it seems that short-run factors predominate in the US boom: the very large government deficit is providing a temporary stimulus to demand – while much of the 'growth' is due either to arms expenditures or to recovery from the savage recession of 1982 when manufacturing output fell by 12.5%. There are many sectors and regions which have still not recovered from this recession – especially those dependent on agriculture.

Of great importance is the unique relationship between the US economy and the present international financial disturbances. Because of the central role of the dollar, reinforced by high US interest rates, the US economy has actually benefited from the sharp transfer of wealth away from productive investment and towards financial assets. The unique attractions of dollar-denominated assets to nervous investors have allowed the US to run up a huge balance of payments deficit. At a time when it is difficult or impossible for other countries to borrow enough to sustain even very small deficits in their trade, the US has had an import explosion financed by willing lenders all over the world. Thus the rcovery is, to a great extent, not a long-run development, but an effect of the present global crisis.

The present revival of US strength, then, is not based – as in the postwar period – on massively superior productive potential. It is an assertion of essentially financial power. In the US economy, finance itself has become the most dynamic sector, employing over 5% of the workforce and absorbing an even greater share of total productive resources. This seems to represent a massive distortion of the needed adjustment process as does also the brutal destruction of much of US manufacturing industry.

Of course, the rapid growth of employment in sectors outside manufacturing makes the US a key precedent in the transition to a new developmental model. But it is far from clear that the US is an example of successful, market-oriented, adjustment. To a large extent its present rapid expansion is based on the same switch from production to finance, from long-run investment to short-run security, which is intensifying the recession and delaying adjustment in other countries. The most obvious imbalance in the present situation is that the world's richest country has become the world's biggest borrower; if the present trade deficit goes on the US will, soon, absurdly, be a net debtor country. This is not (or not yet, at least) a convincing case of long-run stabilisation and sustainable growth.

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THE STALINIST LEGACY

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Towards a new model of economic development

The first point to make is that many of the adverse trends of recent years are not induced by neo-liberal policy, but are in fact the result of very deep-rooted problems of economic structure. Much discussion of Conservative economic policy in Britain, for example, has over-emphasised the role of conscious policy decisions and, correspondingly, failed to recognise the increasingly tight constraints on policy formation. These constraints result from the dissolution of an established pattern of economic advance, under the forces of technological change and major shifts in consumer needs, so that, for example, the consumer durables sector faced a much more slowly growing market and the emergence of qualitatively different techniques.

> the US will soon, absurdly, be a net debtor country

It is increasingly clear that the resulting economic problems and constraints are very general – involving for example most European countries, East and West in varying degrees. The specific effect of neo-liberal economic strategies was not to bring about these changes, but to anticipate and react to them as they emerged, in a largely spontaneous way. In thus seeing the need for change, and in grasping the importance of inflation as a symptom of that need, the radical Right won a key political advantage. As Stuart Hall, in particular, has emphasised, the neo-liberal Right was able to associate themselves with the potent theme of economic renewal.

At the same time, the Left and the labour movement did not adapt their policies to these new problems in a decisive way. Many of the policies we argued for failed to recognise sufficiently the qualitative changes resulting from the disintegration of the old growth model. In essence we tried to sustain the existing pattern of growth, not to begin the transition to new modes of development. We aimed at very high rates of growth without seeing that massive qualitative changes would be necessary to make this possible. It was believed that such problems could be dealt with by suppressing their effects rather than by adapting to the underlying forces.

It follows that left economic strategy requires radical reformulation for the late 80s, in ways which recognise the inadequacy, due to changed circumstances, of much of the analysis and policy of the 60s and 70s. For example, on the central issue of employment, the need to specify new growth sectors which can sustain big increases in jobs overrides previous strategies of expanding the economy as a whole: until structural change has taken place this expansion will not be possible. (This is not an excuse for delay in attacking unemployment: it suggests the need for large scale temporary and transitional job creation).

These adaptations and alterations of strategy will not be easy. They require a basic reformulation of our notions of what a socialist economy should look like, of how socialist values can be reasserted within the emerging phase of development. This vital discussion is just beginning – for example in the recent books by Geoff Hodgson, Andre Gorz and Alec Nove. Part of this necessary reformulation will be an attempt to be more sympathetic to spontaneous economic and social developments, for example the rapid emergence of an informal economic sector which cannot be simply suppressed.

To help move to more positive implications for left strategy, it can be repeated that there are major weaknesses in the neo-liberal approach which make room for effective left initiatives, provided that policy is adapted to the very powerful underlying changes in productive forces, rather than trying to impose a solution in a voluntaristic way. This article has stressed

the weakness of neo-liberal strategy as regards financial tensions, and the consequent difficulty in getting either sufficient investment, or a long-run approach to investment decisions. The implication is that a strategy of stabilisation – using government intervention and controls to reduce some of the most damaging uncertainties and fluctuations – would be markedly superior to existing policies.

Note that this is not to suggest that the new growth process itself can be centrally planned in a traditional way, or that controls can be used directly to bring about development. The complexity and diversity of the economic changes which are needed rule out such centralisation of decision making. But strong and pervasive controls are still needed to provide an environment where decentralised production, public and private, can flourish.

There is also a growing need for the public sponsorship of a very wide range of social and economic innovations. To the extent that the exact shape of the new development model is still unclear, this kind of experimentation is crucially important and it will never take place on a sufficient scale without public intervention to sustain it. It is this which makes the role of the GLC in supporting a huge range of innovatory ventures a decisive advance. Even if many of the individual social and economic experiments fail, the overall strategy represents a major long-run investment and a key precedent for socialist economic policy.

> the neo-liberal Right was able to associate themselves with the potent theme of economic renewal

The argument has stressed the success of the radical Right in presenting their economic strategy as in tune with the need for economic change, as a rejection of the 'museum society'. In conclusion, it can be said that the Right's grasp of this theme could well prove to be very tenuous. In many ways the right wing view of economic change has been crude and backward-looking. The imposition of tight monetary discipline has accelerated some adjustments, while distoring and retarding others. Increasingly, the present Conservative economic policies in Britain seem to react to, rather than initiate, developments, and to lack a clear long-run goal.

This is a major opportunity for the Left. Inevitably much of the Left's energies in recent years have centred on defensive struggles, on resisting neo-liberal methods of change rather than debating the long-run direction in which change should go. But by, alongside these struggles, elaborating a new mode of development in a concrete way, the Left can enormously strengthen its influence. It is likely that the new growth model will depend on the most widespread commitment to detailed qualitative advance, on ensuring that all regions and industries of the national economy are involved in continuous incremental improvements in both methods and products. Technical change as such is only a necessary condition for this pattern of intensive development. A just distribution of the fruits of economic advance, and an active commitment of working people to achieve it will be the decisive factors.□

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'Public opinion' is as complex a creature as it has ever been. There's certainly been no simple 'shift to the right'.

WHAT BRITAIN THINKS

Gregor McLennan

A GREAT DEAL of political argument and policy is justified on the basis of assumptions about what ordinary people think. References to the 'moderate' views of public opinion, the electorate, or the British people are legion in the rhetoric of the Right and play a crucial legitimating role. It is projected that there is a single or unified conservative consensus in social attitudes which holds across class and other boundaries. This claim, obviously, is often and correctly challenged by socialists. But the Left too has its own favourite images of popular beliefs – of an inherently radical working class, for example, or of an array of 'progressive forces', or – in another guise this time – the British people.

In the sense that all political phraseology and campaigning tries to *construct* a social response as much as it reflects it, there is nothing wrong with these appeals. In another sense, however, the Left shares with the Right a tendency to regard its hopes about working class opinion as already achieved realities. The danger here is that on some issues we can become distinctly 'out of touch' with what's going on.

Opinion polls are one means of tapping the broader political culture, and the 1984 report of the *British Social Attitudes* survey[1] is the first attempt since the Mass Observation studies to sift through sampled responses on, not just political and economic policy, but views about class, race and gender.

Without entering fully into the debate about whether polling in general can be trusted, there are at least some reasons for treating this particular survey with respect. First, since it is not an *electoral* poll, there is no predictive or self-fulfilling element to cast doubt on. Second, the authors are aware of the difficulties of trying to be 'representative' in a small sample (about 1700 people). Third, it is presented as an initial poll only, requiring comparison over time and amongst different sample populations. Above all, the pollsters see it as part of their task to question the idea of a single, undifferentiated 'public opinion' and 'the man in the street'. They have tried to show how class, gender, and age differences modulate general impressions. In other words, the report is technically modest and sociologically intelligent. Its results can in no sense be definitive, but it does give a broad indication of the main directions of social concerns.

Table 1: British Institutions[2]

Institution	Well run	Not Well run
Banks	85%	5%
BBC	67	22
Press	49	40
Prisons	46	41
Industry	40	47
Civil service	40	48
Local government	33	56
Trade unions	27	62
Nationalised industries	20	69

Monarchy: important 86%
Not important 11%
Should be abolished 3%

Political attitudes

This section of the survey reviews support for some key British institutions (see Table 1), and confirms the now-standard view of trends of political allegiance. On any reading, the Labour Party faces a historical crisis. 60% of those who consider themselves to be working class do not identify with Labour, and more than one third clearly align themselves to the Tories. A significant change in allegiance has occurred especially amongst skilled workers (38% Labour, 34% Conservative), but in the unskilled working class barely half now identify with Labour, which we must suspect represents a major decline from the postwar heyday. (It might be observed hopefully, though, that these proportions are slightly *less* than the numbers amongst the working class overall which actually *voted* Tory in 1983.)

There are very low levels of commitment to all parties amongst young electors, and political participation in Britain generally is pretty low: there is a widespread sense of powerlessness, and the system seems to survive on pragmatic acquiesc-

[1] *British Social Attitudes: the 1984 Report* edited by Roger Jowell and Colin Airey, Gower Publishing Co Aldershot Hants.

[2] Derived from pp29,30.

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ence rather than normative agreement. Those who mount *any* political protest of a personal or collective kind add up to one in five, and the bulk of these listed petitions as their only form of political expression.

As to the issue of nuclear weapons, the firm expectation of a third world war seems to have risen considerably (to 25%). 48% as against 38% do not think that American arsenals make Britain safer, though two thirds hold that an independent nuclear deterrent *does*. Women and young people are siginficantly more opposed to nuclear arms than are men. Remaining in Nato is a popular option at the present time. On the other major international organisation affecting Britain – the EEC – opinion remains fairly evenly divided: 42% favoured withdrawal. One rather surprising political result is that many more are for the reunification of Ireland (58%) and the withdrawal of troops (38%) than are for separation and an armed British presence.

the expectation of a third world war seems to have risen considerably

Economic policy

Twice as many people think that unemployment rather than inflation is the central economic issue facing the country. This proportion rises to 80% in the ranks of the unskilled and unemployed. 90% support more job creation by the government, who are nevertheless not held to be responsible for the economic situation. Most of the relatively rich feel they've become relatively richer under Thatcher, whilst, unsurprisingly, the low paid think they've become poorer. Again, nearly 90% of the poll supported 'classical Keynesian' economic remedies (though one wonders about the exact framing of this question), and 72% would back some form of import controls. Indeed, as many as 44% said they would accept defence cuts in order to buoy up either industry or social services.

The figures given for those who thought that the gap between high and low incomes was too wide, and who were in favour of progressive taxation is 72:22. But there are less clear-cut issues on the economic front. 60-70% held that British workers did not work hard enough, yet paradoxically this is the same figure as reckoned that there was a serious lack of investment in industry. These views are not necessarily contradictory, but they tend to belong to different causal stories. In concluding this section, the pollsters say: 'It seems that the Government's economic policies during the period 1979-83 commanded little public support at the end of their [first] term of office' (p62). This is clearly quite an important generalisation for the Left, though it carries with it the worrying implication that many people must vote for Margaret on 'charismatic' and traditionalist grounds rather than because of the logic of monetarism.

Social policy and education

The main results in these areas are more mixed, and in the case of education, rather less work seems to have been done in the actual polling. This confirms the essentially provisional character of the enterprise. One half of the respondents declared satisfaction with the health service (though this number goes up sharply amongst Scots, as do most indications of 'radical' attitudes). Whilst there was considerable dissatisfaction with the NHS also, this doesn't amount to a wish for reversing the postwar structure of the welfare state. Only one in ten, for example, desired a reduction in taxation *and* less social spending. Those who definitely wanted *more* taxation and *more* social spending (I suppose we could think of them as 'core' supporters of welfare) amounted to 32%. A clear minority thought that the existence of private health schemes actively damaged the NHS. A parallel result in education is that most people felt a reduction in private schools would have little impact on the quality of the state sector.

one half of respondents declared satisfaction with the health service

A view that is shared by middle and working-class people is that the NHS has over the years benefited the poorer classes most. According to most serious analyses of the effects of the welfare state, however, this widely held view is an illusion, though an interesting one. A more adequate general perception is that real poverty in the UK is widespread and becoming endemic. On housing, a mere one in ten of council tenants are specifically *against* having the right to buy their own house, though fully three-quarters could not see themselves ever wanting or being able to do so.

More people cited large class sizes and inadequate resources as the principal factors which prevent improvement in primary schools. In the secondary area, however, discipline and vocational skills had a higher priority than more finance *per se*, or lack of crowdedness, as the preferred means of bettering education in this sector.

Social and moral values

This is the last category in the report, embracing several important issues. As indicated in Table 2, the belief that there is clear racial prejudice across British society is very strong. There is, though, something of a hiatus between respondents' ideas of other people's bias and their estimation of their own. The absence of a direct question linked to repatriation proposals means that it is difficult to calculate the extent of comprehensively racist opinion, but the overall results on wishing to prevent further immigration into Britain are not encouraging. (One wonders, in fact, whether this last question is a matter of racism, directly: nearly half the black people in the sample, for example, probably thought it wasn't a good idea to let further immigration proceed unregulated.) A further tempering of the impression of British racism is that 69% indicated that they supported laws *against* racial discrimination. Prejudice appears to be higher (or perhaps it's just more honestly admitted) amongst manual workers than in non-manual groups.

Table 2: Racial attitudes[3]

Race prejudice exists:	90%
has increased:	45
will get worse:	42
people who see themselves as biased:	35
support anti-discrimination laws:	69
favour less settlement by blacks:	62
by Asians:	67

As to class, the figures (see Table 3) hold out little hope for the SDP's idea that it is withering away. Of course, when surveys like this use the term 'class' it tends to apply mainly to heads of families (ie, men) and can refer to a whole number of slightly different things: background, occupation, housing, status, income, and so on. So a strict Marxist concept of class might pose rather different questions. Nevertheless, perhaps the Marxist criterion is *too* tight in some ways to catch hold of general atti-

Table 3: Attitudes to class[4]

Class division exists:	70%
has important effects:	58
will continue to be important:	49
optimism about classlessness:	32

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tudes on the issue. It is interesting, therefore, that with a jumbo notion of social class, two-thirds described themselves as working class. And the higher the respondent's own class was thought to be, the less important class considerations became in their view of social behaviour. On the other hand, fully one-half of professional and managerial groups reckoned themselves to be working class or at least upper working class. This is perhaps an unexpected result. It would tend to confirm the appropriateness of the idea that the working class (very broadly conceived) embraces the vast majority of working people, excluding all but top capitalists. But equally, it may point to the considerable social diversity and political consciousness within the broad proletariat! Only 1% unreservedly describe themselves as upper class, and this clarity of class consciousness ties in nicely with recent sociological studies of the core capitalist and landlord fraction.[5]

the most equally shared event is the shopping

A final point about class is that chapter 2 of the report supports the current orthodoxy that class is no longer an important predictor of voting behaviour. Yet from chapter 5 it can be seen that perceptions of class and its significance have not massively declined. It therefore remains an issue and experience of considerable *potential* in politics. Presumably fresh connections have to be added to longstanding ones.

The estimates of actual gender division of household labour are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Estimated domestic labour[6]

Activity	Mainly men	Mainly women	Shared
cleaning	3%	72%	24%
cooking	5	77	17
washing & ironing	1	89	10
money & bills	29	39	32
household repairs	82	6	10

The most equally shared event is the shopping (44%). Some indication of future expectations (though a rather inadequate one) is attempted by showing the opinions of unmarried women on who should do what in the home. Here, equal sharing in cooking, cleaning, shopping, and washing is thought desirable by, respectively, 60/61/79 and 40%. Of course, this cannot be thought to govern actual outcomes. Three-quarters supported laws against sexual discrimination, but this liberalism does not appear to stretch to homosexuals since half the sample would deny gays access to posts of responsibility in the public and educational spheres.

Implications

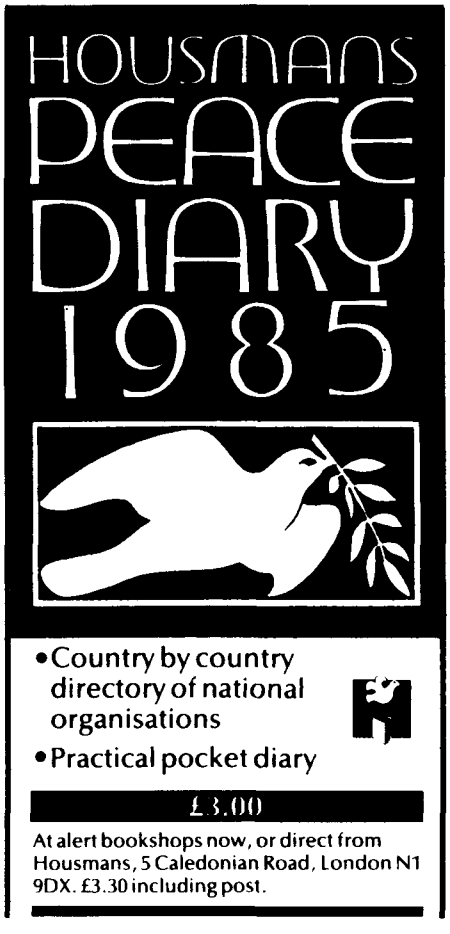
These 'findings' are no more than my selections from the survey's own explorations. Fuller questions could certainly have been asked and other trends winkled out of the data collected. The issue of law and order, for example, reveals important if unsurprising attitudes. There is considerable fear of personally-directed crime and violence, though no particular escalation of riot is expected. 69% would never think of a law as unjust or harmful, and 72% believe the police are doing a fine job. Other historical indications however would suggest that both these percentages have decreased slightly in recent decades, and certainly police 'respect' for the public is thought to have diminished.[7]

This patchwork of apparently contradictory responses arises partly from the piecemeal character of all questionnaires and the way they are inevitably conducted. But it is also a feature which Gramsci in particular noted about 'common sense'. He argued that there were elements of 'good sense' in popular consciousness, but that it tended to lack overall coherence. His conclusion was that from numerous areas of personal experience came a range of rather different judgements and demands. For the most part, people would resolve any antagonisms pragmatically, in the course of their everyday lives and work. Alternatively, greater coherence can be given to popular culture and attitudes by a more general – 'philosophical' – body of thought.

Such a perspective is worth recalling in this context, for the lessons of the survey for the Left are certainly mixed. The answers on nuclear weapons and economic policy are surely encouraging. Clearly, it is easy to exaggerate the effect of Thatcherite ideology on these fronts. That is an important plus. And despite the deep reservoir of racism and sexism; the evidence is that most people are now aware of the criticisms and alternatives to these traditional modes. Across these issues, the impact, however limited, of CND, feminism, the Left and anti-racist campaigns can be felt. And there is enough in popular experience to suggest that ruling class ideologies do not completely take hold of the ideas of subordinate groups and classes. In that sense, even widespread apathy could be considered to have a positive dimension, in that there is a vast pool of poor and alienated people to whom the Left must urgently begin to relate.

On the other hand, there is extensive support for the central British institutions, for a distinctly disciplinarian approach to social questions, for the industrial and banking system, for keeping nuclear weapons, for gender and sexual traditionalism, and so on. It is the changing balance of these contrary pulls that will give the clearest indication of the longterm future for a re-vamped alternative socialist politics. As it is, no uncontroversial picture of a widening of conservative hegemony can be presented. The survey would not seem to endorse the view that there has been a full-scale shift to the right in popular attitudes. But the stark absence of belief in the programmatic and positive aspects of socialism and the labour movement, indicates the considerable 'negative' achievement of Thatcherism over the last decade. □

[3]Derived from pp123-5.
[4]Derived from pp130-2.
[5]cf John Scott *The Upper Classes* Macmillan London 1982.
[6]Derived from page 134.
[7]*British Crime Survey* Home Office Research Study No 76 1983 pp 29-30.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WAYS OF WITNESSING

Interview with John Berger

John Berger's writings on art have fundamentally changed the way we see painting and sculpture. His materialist approach became widely and controversially known after the television series and book *Ways of Seeing*. His other books on art include *The Success and Failure of Picasso* and *About Looking*. Berger has also written novels. When *G* won the Booker Prize in 1972 he promptly announced that he was donating half the money to the Black Panthers in protest against Booker McConnell's holdings in the West Indies; the rest went to research his book on migrant labour – *A Seventh Man*. Berger now lives in a small peasant village near the French Alps where he is working on a trilogy of books on life there. His new book *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* will surprise many with its personal and poetic treatment of love, time and displacement. Here he talks to Geoff Dyer.

You ran away from school at sixteen. What happened between then and your writing on art for New Statesman? *What were the early influences on you?*

There were many. . . I came to London during the war and enrolled at the Central School of Art. At night I was able to earn some extra money fire-watching. When I was eighteen I went into the army where, because of my background, I was expected to become an officer – which I refused to do. Because of this I remained in a recruiting unit in Northern Ireland, just outside Belfast and this was actually the first time that I lived with working class men. This had a great effect on me, not directly politically but socially.

I think I was already quite politicised by the time I was sixteen. One of the things I owe to my father – usually I was in opposition to him – was that he arranged for me, when I was quite young, to go on a visit to a mine. It made an enormous impression on my young mind. My reading tended to be more anarchist than Marxist – Kropotkin and all the anarchist classics. But at the same time because of the war, because of Stalingrad and the almost unimaginable cost of their war I, along with many others, was very open to the achievements of the Soviet revolution.

When I came out of the army I enrolled at the Chelsea School of Art and I began to get involved in current politics here and it was from then that my relationship with the Communist Party began. Along with that I began, by myself, reading the Marxist classics.

Your writing on art?

I did some talks on European masterpieces on the radio for BBC West Africa and then I simply sent some of them off to the *New Statesman* and said this is what I can do. To my great surprise they responded.

How were your early articles received?

They were considered very outrageous at the time. The *New Statesman* received many complaints and I had to fight week by week for my articles. I had no power at first but it was good training. I owe a lot to my editors although politically I was opposed to them.

How?

Basically they were not Marxists. I suppose their ideological position was liberal or logical positivist. My writing was very obviously informed by Marxist theories and they did not share, for instance, the emphasis that I gave to class struggle in my writing on art.

Here I would like to add something very important. Until the moment that the Soviet Union gained nuclear parity – while it was the victim of nuclear blackmail by the United States and it was possible to envisage (as was frequently done) Moscow being blown to smithereens by the United States – at that moment, whatever your doubts, I felt you had to be *for* the Soviet Union. There was a straight choice to be made. Krushchev's revelations and so on were very important, but the whole situation changed when that catastrophic inequality changed.

To what extent did you feel that you were working in isolation? There is a European tradition of Marxist writing on the arts but not a British one really?

I was very closely associated with people in the Communist Party, particularly with a group of painters within it and we discussed many things. But this small group was certainly isolated from dominant opinion – this was the beginning of the Cold War you see.

Were you in the CP?

No, never. I worked closely with people who were members, I sometimes spoke at public meetings on Communist Party platforms and I wrote a lot for their press but was never a member. It was assumed that was and whenever I was accused of being member I never denied it because that did not seem the important thing to do.

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Was it a conscious decision not to join?

Well, the one thing I felt that I *did* know about was artistic creation and I had reservations about the party line in relation to the arts.

Can we go forward now to Ways of Seeing? *Many of the points made have become part of received wisdom very quickly but what was the response to it at the time?*

Basically the BBC didn't like it. They broadcast it very late at night but we were able to show that, although the viewing figures were small, the switch-off rate was much lower than average. And so after a struggle we managed to get them to show it earlier in the evening. We had to struggle for years to get them to sell it to the States and when they did I think they probably made a lot of money on it – we didn't.

What about the criticisms of Ways of Seeing, *notably those of Peter Fuller? In* Ways of Seeing *you speak scathingly of 'mystification' in much art criticism; you stress, with regard to a painting by Hals for example that we respond to it because we live 'in a society of comparable social relations and moral values'. In your new book you seem much less unhappy with words like 'mystery' and notions of 'timelessness'.*

The weakness of *Ways of Seeing* is that I didn't create a theory of the exceptional work of art, that I didn't go further in explaining a mystery which I felt *was* there in paintings. Also there are certain early essays such as 'Who is an Artist?' where my position is not very different from that in the new book.

But 'Who is an Artist?' is hardly typical of the early Berger. . .

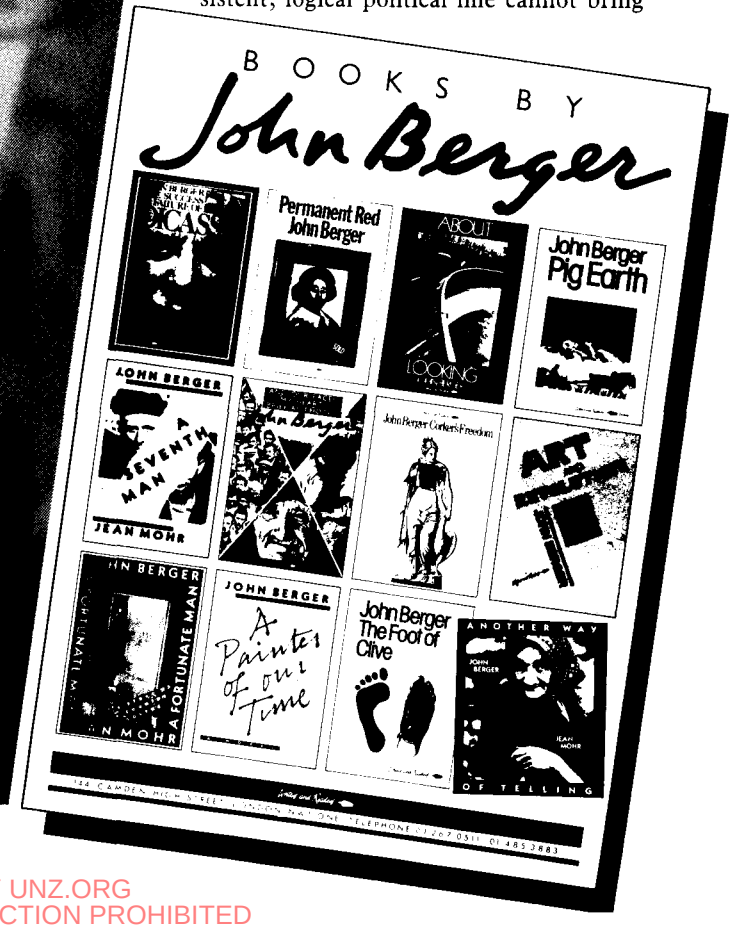
Yes, but as one changes and as times change, so what one feels it is urgent to say, changes. I am glad to say that I have evolved – the emphasis I have given to particular aspects of works of art has changed. Here I would like to emphasise two things that are so deeply inside me that they are hardly even at the level of informed ideas. One is a relation to what I have always felt to be the 'mystery' of art. The other is a gut solidarity with those without power, with the underprivileged. Where perhaps I am a bad Marxist is that I have an aversion to political power whatever its form. Intuitively I am always with those who live under that power.

That reminds me of something in Wordsworth: 'He could afford to suffer with those whom he saw suffer. . .' What about the strain of romanticism in your own work?

I am a romantic – without any question. I wouldn't deny that for a moment. I see it as something positive.

In your new book you write that it is easy to lose sight of what is historically invisible – 'as if people lived only history and nothing else'. Now, Marxism sees history as an arena of struggle but to what extent do you see romanticism or love as a refuge from history and 'the laws of change which spare nothing'?

At the level of theory: yes. In real life, I don't think so. During the Soviet revolution and the civil war people didn't stop falling in love. Think of Mayakovsky who wrote extraordinary love poems at the same time that he was writing political poems. The problem is that in an individual life they often do not confirm one another. If one denies too much those subjective intuitions which romanticism is about and which are frequently expressed in love then something withers. The consistent, logical political line cannot bring



John Berger attending the opening of Central Books in the 50s.

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them back. When that withering takes place there is political danger.

Your new book is very much concerned with time and with displacement: 'ours is the century of banishment', you write. For the last 20 years you have been living in France. Do you feel banished? Exiled? What were your reasons for leaving England?

I do not consider myself banished. Mine was a completely voluntary exile, a privileged one. There was not a single reason for going, there were many. It was partly because there were people working in France whom I felt close to: Sartre; in a different way, Camus; Merleau-Ponty. In the Britain that I left there were no thinkers like that. But that is just one reason among many.

And what about Britain now, as seen from where you live?

Well, let's go back to the 1940s, to *Labour Monthly*. Palme Dutt wrote virtually the whole magazine and he foresaw, it seems to me, in large outline, everything that has happened: the economic evolution, the economic collapse – everything. He was very prophetic. He had a great influence on me so that nothing that has happened in Britain has surprised me. . . If you ask me more specifically. . . Well. . . I support the miners' strike. . . wholeheartedly. . .

You are currently working on a trilogy of books concerning the peasant community in which you have been living for ten years. What do they think of you?

How do I know? I feel part of them so I'm not going to speak *for* them. All I will say is this: a friend of mine was in South West France and he mentioned my name to a young peasant there. The peasant had read the book (*Pig Earth*) and said: 'it is the best book about us of this century'. This is someone I didn't know, on the other side of France and I mention it not out of literary pride but to make a point about communication. It shows that peasants have a sense of identity – he said 'us' – that they read books and that they do not see my books as those of a stranger.

Your new book will surprise many people. It seems to be a working out of internal tensions and contradiction. Do you think that that internalising is a result of living where you do and as you do now?

I don't think so really. I live among peasants and they can live with contradictions easily; they do not think that contradictions have to be resolved. But it is a very personal book, it is about love and the modern world. I have a hunch that although it is very personal it deals with things that a great many people are thinking about or that they are concerned with. . .

'We live not just our own lives but the longings of our century' as you write in Our Faces. *In this new book you combine prose and poetry and your method is less direct than in your previous books. You write here that in the 18th and 19th centuries most protests against social injustice were in prose. This style was in keeping with a faith in reason which history would be seen to bear out. You go on: 'The future cannot be trusted. The moment of truth is now. And more and more it will be poetry, rather than prose, that receives this truth'. What do you mean by that?*

Mark you, I'm not saying that hope for literature resides in poetry but that if you take a global view life is so desperate that perhaps only poetry can speak to that desperation.

Finally I would like to take a line from the play you have written with Nella Bielski, A Question of Geography: *'Each of us comes into the world with her or his unique possibility – which is like an aim, or, if you wish, almost like a law. The job of our lives is to become – day by day, year by year, more conscious of that aim so that it can at last be realised.' What do you see as the job of your life?*

I don't think I can answer that. . . Perhaps I am like all people who tell stories – and I often think now that even when I was writing on art, it was really a way of story-telling – story tellers lose their identity and are open to the lives of other people. Maybe when you look at their entire output you can see something that really belongs to that one person. But at any one moment it is difficult to see what the job of your life is because you are so aware of what you are lending yourself to. This is perhaps why I use the term 'being a witness'. One is witness of others but not of oneself.

FOLLOWING THE FIGHT TO THE FINISH

Paul Marshall

A happy characteristic of the British is their total detachment from their national problems. In 'middle Britain' stretching from Cornwall to Scotland avoiding the industrial heartlands, terribly nice people live charmed lives unaffected by unsettling outside events. In Cornwall, for instance, striking Welsh miners are seen as film extras flitting across the TV screens every night to be booed at like Injuns chasing Roy Rogers. The coal dispute has nothing whatever to do with this peaceful county where Mrs Thatcher, God bless her, will keep thuggery at bay for as long as she and the Conservative Party both shall live.

Hitch-hiking from Truro to South Wales in search of the coal dispute, along roads wending through smug cathedral cities is a good way of seeing 'middle Britain' at its smarmiest best. What is so sad about this is that there is so much of it.

People are terribly kind and nobody talks about the strike even when invited to. It might be costing X millions a day but who notices that. The nearest thing to politics and Rule Brithatcher is an RAF man driving to Plymouth. 'I'm only a bum in the wings' (air force) he says 'but that's better than being a bum in the grunts' (army). He only stops for servicemen and lorry drivers because they are the only people who have ever helped him in life. Why ever did he pick me up? Fooled perhaps by my ex-ATS hold-all bulging with a tape-recorder and sleeping bag or my ancient (1972) army surplus boots.

Middle Britain ends at Newport; though even here on the threshold of hell where all roads lead to THE VALLEYS people have to be jogged into talking about 'the problem'. A Welsh salesman gives me a lift along the M4. Has he seen much hardship amongst the miners? 'Oh Christ no. Most of them are doing jobs on the side. York-

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shire started it all so why should THE VALLEYS help them if they didn't help us years ago. Men want to go back to work but they're scared.' He sounds like the *Daily Mail* in Welsh.

We pass Llanwern steel works in a cloud of smog and nothing seems amiss. The horizon is thick with tipper lorries. 'Is this where the picketing goes on?' I ask like an American at Stratford-on-Avon. It is but they have seen sense now. If I go up THE VALLEYS I will see tubs outside supermarkets for people to drop food in for the strike fund. 'Although every time I go there they're always empty.' Perhaps he's been looking at the miners' shopping trolleys.

Newport is the gateway to the valleys and capital of a district steeped in trade union history. Here they are accustomed to picking-off the excesses of the ruling class. Suppression, class warfare, strikes, civil unrest are nothing new. In 1839 the Chartists led by John Frost marched on Newport jail 'to show ourselves to the town', an act which led to bloodshed on the streets when the troopers were called in. Six miles from Newport is the pit village of Machen where in the late nineteenth century miners from Scotland were brought in by the local mineowners to break a strike. The Scots have been known there ever since as 'Scots cattle' and despised. But Tonypandy arouses the strongest feelings. In 1910 police sent to break a strike there injured several miners creating a hatred of the English that has never been erased. The valleys could not be a more suitable place for an industrial dispute.

Newport is broad, long, noisy and grubby. Modern high-rise office blocks, shopping centres and the bus and train stations, are sewn together with lengths of steel walkways that make it look like Dan Dare's 'City of the Future'. Even amongst all this the Chartists are not forgotten. In the subway leading to the bus station a mosaic depicting the Chartists' adventures throws back echoes of the shopper's heels.

But even modern architecture can't disguise the hardship and grubbiness. Terrific designs are spoiled by swirling litter, vomit-squashed chips and scuffed concrete. Dirt covers everything like a sheet of grey cling-wrap. Only at night when the dirt is invisible and the lights from the wine bars spill into the river Usk like melting crayons are the floodlit office blocks pointers to something better.

The rumble of coal lorries belting towards Llanwern begins at 5 a.m. A blanket of fog is hanging across the city, thick enough to hide the rumbling ore trains feeling their way across the girder bridge. 'Where's the picketing today?' I ask a man standing in the doorway of 'Arthur and Emanuelle Coal Merchants'. 'Plenty in the valleys' he says 'just follow the motorway.'

Just following the motorway is not easy when the right road off the motorway could be one of a dozen that pierce the valleys like roots. Instead I get a bus to the Caerphilly road. A man in a clapped-out Cortina stops. 'Where to boy?' 'Anywhere that's on strike'. 'Trethomas do you?' 'Yes please if that's on strike'. 'They're all on strike boy. They don't even know what day it is.' The car rears like a bronco following the valley floor and the strip of mist that seems to have been painted onto the hilltops. Then it stops and the man runs around and opens the door for me because it can only be opened from the outside. 'Trethomas' he shouts.

Trethomas a pit village, population unknown, not RAC listed, is so far removed from middle Britain and even Newport that it could be Africa. It looks scruffy, clapped-out, and awful.

A string of tatty shops on the main road are cowering from the vibrations of heavy lorries. Behind the shops long strips of terrace houses stretch up the hillside like huge brick trains. The houses look grim and dirty. Navigation Hill which goes right up the side of the valley is so steep it tires you out just to look at it. Between the houses are plots of empty land that nobody wants; the results of mindless planning decisions made in the rush to get the pit into profit.

But the drabness of the village is nowhere near as alarming as the silence. At the top of the hill where the terrace houses end, behind the railway line, the normally noisy pit is shut. Winding wheels, coal washers, tubes, pistons, barrels, buckets are as still as the mist surrounding them. The unaccustomed silence is so shocking it can almost be heard. Already the mine has become a monument to the present dispute; a rusting reminder of what the fight is all about. The pit is the village, paying its wages, supporting its shops, keeping the community together. There is little other industry around here apart from the British Benzol plant at Bedwas. The pit is the reason for the village and if the pit dies the village dies also.

By the main road lots of men are chatting, shopping, looking after children.

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Some older men are sitting on wooden benches outside the public lavatories. On the wall above them somebody has scrawled 'Derek is a' next to the 'Women' sign. One man tells me he lost a leg in a pit accident in the 50s but does not want to talk about it because 'it's not worth mentioning.'

At half-past-nine four tough looking men have taken up positions on Navigation Hill, close to the mine. I can tell they are pickets because they are wearing big yellow NUM badges. One man has a badge on each lapel like Gordon the Big Engine. They agree to talk about the strike, answering at first in slow official language; 'the hardship is bad, very bad; married men are getting £7 a week. A chap asked me what he could get on that. I said go and buy one good meal and forget the rest.' Then the replies become more bitter. There is no doubt who the enemy is: Thatcher, the police and the Tory press. Their hatred for these 'villains' is almost tangible. 'Too many people in this country read the *Express* and the *Sun*'. Which is why they believe in Arthur Scargill. He is the only one who tells them the truth. 'I've been to some of Arthur Scargill's meetings and I tell you when he starts to speak it makes the hair on the back of your head curl.'

These men are 'flying pickets' and have seen 'action' all over the coal-fields. They have horror stories of police tracking NUM coaches on the motorways with panda cars blocking the sliproads. Of pickets being stopped 15 miles from their destinations and told to walk the rest of the way; even on one occasion in the pitch dark along country lanes. Pickets, they say, have been ejected from pubs, questioned about their political beliefs, stopped from crossing roads and arrested for sitting on walls. When the coaches are stopped the driver is told if he goes any further he'll be arrested on any charge that is convenient. 'I told the inspector this is a free country and he told me straight, 'this is not a free country any more".

They have been charged by police horses at Orgreave 'absolutely terrifying' and chased by dogs in Yorkshire. The police, they say, have no regard for decency nor, when it comes to it, private property. 'If the police were here now protecting a convoy they would push us into this person's garden. Even if they had just planted seeds or something they would still do it; just trample the lot down.

There is no doubt in their minds that they are going to win. The Tories are out to get them, their union, their jobs and their village. If Mrs Thatcher cannot see the reality of her own argument then they certainly can. It is a fight to the death which if they lose means a kind of death anyway.

Up the road in Bedwas the union are assembled in the Working Mens' Hall for a Lodge meeting. Draped across the outside is a banner that says 'Cinderella all this week'. A reporter from the local paper is sitting on a wall chain-smoking. He tells me of the hardship being suffered in the district. Men with families to support are getting £47 a week from the DHSS and single miners are getting nothing; the state assumes the union are paying them £15 a week strike pay, which they are not. Miners are having to sell camping equipment and even tellys. Two weeks ago he covered a divorce case where the couple concerned blamed the strike for the break-up. 'Some families are living under an intolerable strain'. Mid-Glamorgan County Council, which fortunately for the miners is Labour-controlled, is doing all it can to ease the burden particularly amongst the children. They have organised free dinners for them and set-up soup kitchens and although these are nothing like the bowl-and-ladle affairs of the 1930s they are fulfilling exactly the same need.

He starts to talk about police violence then stops as a policeman comes out of the hall. The reporter tells him it's OK this lad is just a tourist. 'He's from Bristol anyway' he adds and they both laugh. Bristol for whatever reason seems to be something of a local joke.

Caerphilly just round the corner is a much safer place to be. The industry here is tourism and thousands of visitors a year come to gape at the crumbling castle which leans across the river like a Celtic tower of Pisa. Even here the 'cause' is not forgotten. Outside Tesco a man with an orange bucket is collecting for the strike fund; shouting his message across the shoppers' heads and into the store where it wafts over the veg aisle like muzak. 'Help fight for the future of these valleys against this Tory government.' He has collected about £20, mainly in silver but there are a few one pound notes as well. 'It's a pity you hadn't been here a few minutes earlier he says 'because I've just had a dust-up with somebody in the crowd.' Probably Tesco's manager.

Further down the street two elderly miners are collecting for the Food Fund. A taxi driver promises a tin of corned beef as he cuts the corner in front of them. They tell me that Thatcher and McGregor and the Tory press are out to get them, and give me a copy of *The Miner*, 'to take home to England.' In it there are pictures of the Orgreave 'battle' lines, showing mounted police charging retreating miners and police on foot wielding truncheons. None of this they say is shown on the telly, but the NUM have their own cameras at the big demonstrations and have film evidence of what goes on. It is, the old miners say, a police state and the police and the Tories will never be forgiven for what they are doing to the mining communities: not ever. They thank me for my ten pence contribution as if it was a thousand pounds. The amount is not important to them; it is the support that matters.

On the other side of town the 'Harold Wilson Industrial Estate', like those grubby office blocks in Newport, points the way to a better future that is within sight but out of reach. The trouble with South Wales and the coal industry is the trouble with the system, which functions not to satisfy needs but to generate profit. The 'unprofitable' coal industry and the communities it supports, has fallen foul of this system on their own. Capitalism will not be changed by a few thousand tormented coal miners no matter how obdurate they are. Silent, but far from docile Middle Britain has too much to lose from such a thing. In the best traditions of socialism the clashes will go on between those who own and those who produce; between men with busted legs and the men who edit the newspapers; the good, the bad and the ugly.

The road back to Middle Britain teems with the good and the pretty. 'We've just been to London airport to see our daughter's family off to Jamaica for their holidays. . . these unprofitable pits should be closed. . . Wales has such lovely scenery hasn't it?'

At Bath, the epitome of terribly nice Britain with its ancient buildings bathed under floodlights, the contrast with grub by South Wales is startling. A terribly nice old lady who gives me a lift from here to Truro thinks Mrs Thatcher is doing 'so much' for the country and dear Mr Churchill's wartime speeches which she read from time to time still send shivers down her back. 'Like Mr Scargill's speeches do for the miners?' I ask.

Absolutely not. 'The miners' she says smiling 'should be horse-whipped.'

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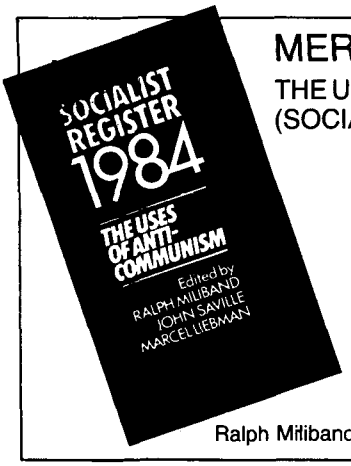

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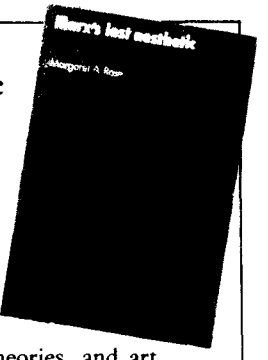

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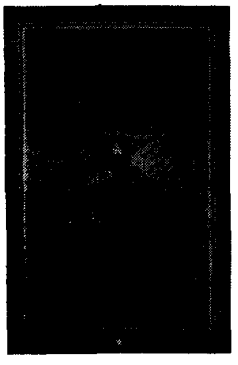

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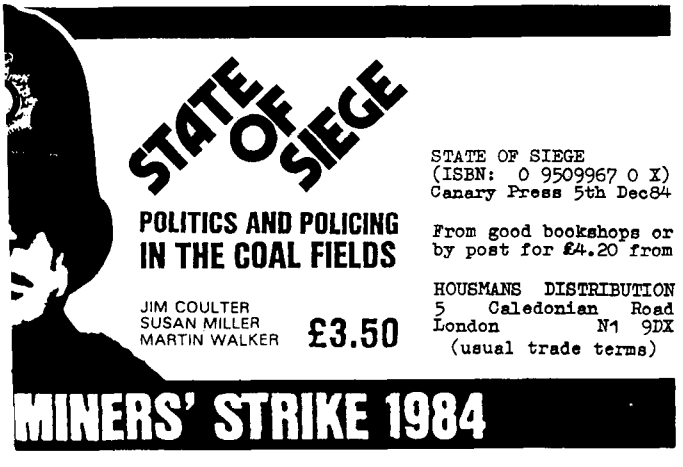

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CRITICS CHOICE

Politics

1984: A Year of New Alliances?

Class has remained one of the hot political topics of 1984: does the erosion of Labour support suggest that class has lost its relevance? And do the arguments of feminist and black activists mean that the working class has to be dislodged from its previous pride of place? The most heartening publications of the year have been those which call on us, not to abandon class as an old-fashioned notion, but to recognise that the working class is both male and female, black and white, skilled and unskilled, employed and without a job.

In **Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the 80s** (Virago) Beatrix Campbell has done us the immense service of taking a feminist politics into the heartland of traditional working class life. She says in her introduction that 'being a feminist puts a woman both inside and outside the mainstream of working-class politics, which are stewed in sexual prejudice and privilege'. But the power of her book is that she has been able to develop a critique of that politics from *within*, one that confirms the absolute centrality of class and poverty, yet refuses to dodge the inequalities between women and men, or the way that what she calls the 'men's movement' has so long masqueraded as the sole voice in socialist and labour politics.

The moment of publication – just as the miners began their long-drawn out struggle for the survival of their jobs and lives – has given the book an added poignancy. Beatrix Campbell rightly notes the place of the miner in socialist iconography, and she subverts this with her description of the women in the mining towns, their interminable labours against the coal dust before the introduction of pithead baths, their continued disenfranchisement from the union decisions that will dictate their lives. She leaves the miners with the comment that 'industrial action today needs a leap of the political intellect. It needs more than will, it needs the imagination to find a way'. Almost as she put down her pen, Women Against Pit Closures' groups were springing into existence in virtually every mining area, a story whose origins are partly told in the pamphlet produced by the **Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures** (available c/o WCC, St James' House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield). Women in the mining communities are organising as women, but they are fighting for their class: not rejecting the 'men's movement' but making it their own.

The argument that the working class is more than the minority of skilled white male workers has been particularly associated with the women's movement and the black community, but the white male politician who has most clearly identified with this is Ken Livingstone. **Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher: Tariq Ali in conversation with Ken Livingstone**, (Verso) confirms him as one of the most thoughtful voices on the British Left. He argues for 'a coalition which includes skilled and unskilled workers, unemployed, women and black people as well as the sexually oppressed minorities'. Though some have suggested this leads him to ditch the more traditional constituency of the Labour Party, this is not the impression I get from reading these interviews. The emphasis is genuinely on alliances, not setting up the new constituencies as a way of beating down the old, and Livingstone comes over as one deeply committed to an unsectarian politics. Refusing most of the openings Tariq Ali gives him to launch into political denunciation, he criticises instead the Left's tendency to leap in with accusations of betrayal.

Outside these British debates, my main find this year was Alice Walker: a belated discovery, some would say, when she has been writing her heart out since the mid-sixties. This year The Women's Press brought out **In Search of Our Mother's Gardens**, a collection of essays and reviews written between 1966 and 1982, and **In Love and Trouble**, an early collection of short stories. More than any other writer I can recall, Alice Walker seems able to combine anger with generosity, to weave her way through the complex politics of race and class and gender without either fudging the issues or declaring implacable sides. Whether she is describing the fashionable daughter who returns to her Southern home with a newly chosen African name, the arrogance of a young black man who dismissed a novel by a black lesbian writer with the words 'this bullshit should not be encouraged', or the fragile friendship of a white woman and a black woman which founders when the white woman is raped by a black man, and can survive neither her silence nor her speaking out – whatever the theme, we are in the thick of almost impossible tensions. Sometimes Alice Walker just leaves us there, with conflicts that centuries of oppression prevent us from solving today. Other times she makes her own clear choices: that black women, for example, must not be intimidated by accusations that they are being divisive. But whichever it is she never gives up on understanding: she too refuses the attractions of a sectarian politics.

Anne Phillips

Who's Afraid of Tariq Ali?

British politics is still as much about individuals as about ideology – and by far the best current affairs books of the last year have been at heart biographical.

The sharpest insights into where the Left is going in Britain have been provided by the biographies of Neil Kinnock and Ken Livingstone, rather than by the multitude of books on 'whither the Left', worthy though they are.

For any understanding of the realignment of the Labour Party, at least at Westminster, between the new grouping of Right, Centre and soft Left versus hard Left, Robert Harris's **The Making of Neil Kinnock** is indispensable. He records with precision and wit Kinnock's transformation after the 1979 election from lovable rebel to establishment power seeker. One can see why Denis Healey and co believe that he has got what it takes to win office for all his lack of experience.

Similarly, John Carvel's **Citizen Ken** vividly traces Ken Livingstone's rise. His succession of council seats in Lambeth Hackney, Hampstead and Paddington backed by a formidable index of political contacts, represents a trail of almost Dis

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raelian opportunism. But then that is what politics is all about whatever the purists may think. Carvel emphasises Livingstone's success as a non-sectarian builder of coalitions of complementary groups on the Left – aided of course by the ineptness of Patrick Jenkin. What Carvel cannot answer is how these formidable talents will translate to Westminster which is presumably Livingstone's next destination.

Most political attitudes are shaped in late adolescence so that the most revealing parts of many biographies concern the early years. An omnibus view of key phases in the moulding of Britain's political elite is provided in David Walter's **The Oxford Union**, appropriately subtitled playground of power. This is much more than an account of a somewhat stylised debating society. He depicts the youthful Michael Foot, then a Liberal, who was described at the time as hating 'jingoism which he attributes to the Tories as much as he dislikes the attack on individual liberty which he believes to be inherent in socialism, but he never sneers at the views of his opponents. That is why his friends come from all parties.'

Another young hero of the Union was Tony Benn, whom Walter says even then 'assumed working-class habits. He used to wear a flat cap and rode about on his bicycle with a haversack on his back.' The impression among his contemporaries was that he was heading for the Labour establishment and seemed far less of a rebel than the young Gerald Kaufman who appeared on the Union scene a few years later.

Another treat from the Walter book is a picture of Tariq Ali dancing the night away at the Union ball in 1964. Then described as flamboyant and an upper-class revolutionary, Tariq Ali is still on the scene, like David Frost, a reminder of those far-off days of Grosvenor Square and the mini-kirt.

Tariq Ali has also surfaced this year in conversation with Ken Livingstone in a dialogue entitled **Who's Afraid of Margaret Thatcher?** At one point Tariq Ali remarks that he is afraid that Ken will have to plough through some of the socialist classics sooner or later, not for any moral reasons but to formulate an alternative socialist strategy. So it is no more chat shows for Red Ken and more Miliband and Mandel. My money is on the untutored Ken.

There have been fewer current affairs books about the Right. Francis Pym's **The Politics of Consent** has some biting chapters dissecting the style of Mrs Thatcher's administration but it is commonplace in its analysis of policy.

But most unusual of all this year's political books is **Our Masters' Voices** by Max Atkinson, an academic analyst of speech techniques. He looks at the ways in which politicians win applause, through phrasing and points of emphasis. The current champion is Tony Benn whose particular and highly effective device is to talk through applause to build up a rapport with his audience. This is just the book to send to one's favourite, or most tiresome, bore in the hope of livening up next year's political meetings.

Peter Riddell

CRITICS CHOICE
Fiction

Rigging Miracles

I don't have a great deal of time to read novels as they come out, so when asked to contribute a short piece on new writing I had read and enjoyed this year I doubted whether I would have read enough to be of any interest. After a little thought, however, I realised that despite itself, 1984 has come up with some good writing, both fiction and non-fiction.

Of particular interest are the three or four books published this year that have grappled with the problem of religion in one way or another. Too few people these days recognise that the power of the church and the quagmire of superstition are not to be underestimated. Who would declare themselves a freethinker nowadays?

First then, **The Wild Girl** by Michèle Roberts (Methuen £8.50). This is a remarkable book, a fictional fifth gospel written by Mary Magdalene, the prostitute and wild girl of the title. It is, essentially, a passionate attack on the male bias of received Christianity and a prophecy of nuclear war. Its inspiration comes from the silenced female figures of the Christian myths: Mary Magdalene herself, who appears here as the lover of Christ and his most intelligent disciple, Mary the mother of Christ, Martha, to whom credit for at least one of Christ's 'miracles' is given, and the strange figure of the midwife and shaman Salome. Its inspiration comes too from the women of Greenham Common, women who are refusing to be silenced. Michèle Roberts writes in the sonorous rhythms of the Bible and her final apocalyptic vision is as powerful as the Revelation it parallels.

The power of the Catholic Church is the theme of Keith Roberts' bizarre fantasy **Pavane** (Penguin £2.95). The year is 1968, the setting is England under the rule of Rome. Scientific discoveries have been made, but their use has been proscribed by Rome. An electric light bulb is an object of heresy. Fear and superstition stalk the land; the Inquisition performs its bloody investigations and the Old Ones, the pre-Christian gods, haunt the hills and heaths of the desolate countryside. Roberts is good at detailing the minutiae of a world held back from knowledge: a finely imagined depiction of the politics of the established church in action.

Graham Greene celebrated his eightieth birthday with **Getting to Know the General** (Bodley Head £8.95), a slightly flat account of his friendship with the late Omar Torrijos, the progressive Panamanian leader. Greene chats and drinks his way around Central America, mostly in the company of Chuchu, Torrijos' Marxist

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philosopher cum security guard. Only occasionally – as when he describes a miracle-rigging in Nicaragua designed to discredit the Sandinistas – does his writing achieve that satisfying mixture of the clash of ideas (notably Christian and Marxist) and impish humour which characterises his best fiction. Greene fans might do better to stick to the paperback edition of **Monsignor Quixote** which appeared this autumn (Penguin £1.95).

Other pleasures this year have included a marvellously zappy collection of short stories from the black American writer Toni Cade Bambara, **Gorilla My Love** (The Women's Press £3.95) and an ambitious first novel from Frankie Finn, **Out On the Plain** (The Women's Press £7.95 hbk, £3.50 pbk) which manages to be about writing and language while still being gripping to read.

The travel writing boom continues unabated; perhaps 1984's most enjoyable offering has been the paperback appearance of William Least Heat-Moon's **Blue Highways** (Picador £2.95). Moon loses his teaching job and decides to drive around America on its backroads, avoiding the large towns and conurbations – the raw material for that rather frayed genre, the American road novel/movie, you might fear. Moon, however, is half Indian, so he is looking for an American different to Jack Kerouac's or Terence Mallick's, and the result is a very satisfying, laid-back odyssey which takes us through Nameless Tennessee, Dime Box Texas and Cape Porpoise Maine. Moon describes straightforward country people mostly so pleasant that it is difficult to imagine them re-electing the fundamentalist ex-actor with his vision of a world divided between empires of good and evil.

Finally, I had high hopes of Pluto's socialist thrillers, but found them slightly dull – the best piece of thriller publishing this year has been Penguin's reissue of three Robert B Parker thrillers, **The Godwulf Manuscript, God Save the Child** and **Mortal Stakes** (Penguin, £1.75 each). Spenser not only has a heart of gold, a right-on relationship with Susan Silverman and a power-packed punch that ensures that justice is done and felt to be done, but he's also a dab hand in the kitchen. For those of you who haven't tried any of his specialities, I recommend the courgettes fried in beer batter. Eat them while they're hot.

Joanna Goulding

CRITICS CHOICE

Magazines

Are you wearing the right aftershave?

Over the years, I must have been asked a hundred times why there isn't a male equivalent to the woman's magazine in Britain. The answers are off pat by now – facetious model reply: until a man can tell his friends in a pub that he can't get it up, he won't want to be seen with a magazine that tells him why he can't (and that is what a *direct* equivalent would be). Serious model reply: men already have their 'magazines', otherwise called the daily press. (Unlike the States, where until recently there was no national daily paper – the lack of which, I'm sure, has led to a high male purchase of magazines.) In other words, there has been no *need* for a general interest men's journal.

But, silly me, I was forgetting that 'need' has precious little to do with the creation of a new product, new profits, new sources of advertising revenue. It has been a constant niggle to publishers that they haven't yet found a way of reaping all those juicy pennies so beloved by *Esquire, GQ* etc, across the waters. The problem has always been: how do you persuade a man to go out and buy something he's never bought before?

And now, bless them, they've hit upon the answer. He doesn't *have* to buy a magazine – he'll be given one. And he'll be given it by none other than the woman in his life; this year's publishing news is about the man's magazine banded as a free gift on to the back of women's magazines. . . just until he's come to accept it well enough to see it as a natural purchase. There's talk of *Men's Bazaar* (free with *Harpers*) and *Men In Vogue* (free with *Vogue*), while two publications have gone further than just talking: this month's *Cosmo* came out with **Cosmo Man** and next month's (December) *Options* will bring you **OM – Options for Men**.

The ground for these titles has been well laid; readers of women's magazines must have noticed the plethora of stories in recent months about the New Man. He is, variously, kinder, cleaner, more sensitive, more 'feminine', more in tune with the post-lib woman. . . in other words, more likely to be open to the idea of reading a woman-style magazine.

What bothers me is that reading these two supplements I'm not meeting any kind of *new* man at all. *Cosmo Man* first: guest-editor Paul Keers offers us a rather endearing mix of stories from his own piece on male friendship to one on living with a receding hairline, one on getting fit in a gym and one on what a woman finds sexy in a man's body. It's all rather earnest, but not particularly harmful, once you've grasped the message that what *Cosmo's* New Man cares most about is baldness, the size of his willy and his sexual prowess. Should this New Man ever meet up with an Old Man, one suspects that they might actually find they had rather a lot in common. Still, there's a bit about cooking which is OK and a bit about the joys of fatherhood, which is better – and if you are left with the feeling that most of it could as easily have appeared in the very male dominated *Cosmopolitan*, there's no dire offence.

For that you have to turn to *OM*. Let me say first of all that for an old hack like myself, much of the presentation of this magazine warms the cockles: it's filled with good design and photography and writing; skilled editing and subbing and delicious glossy paper. But lordy, lordy the *message* would do credit to the young De Lorean of the 1950s. The cover offers *The Million Dollar Fantasies Of Steve Spielberg* and *The Risks You Have To Take To Get Rich* and *Alan Bleasdale* (who should know better) *On Image*; the contents list echoes with *Meet The Men Who Make Millions* and *Why Is A Porsche So Chic*?. . . inadequacy rears its ugly head nowhere. Even a photo-feature on natural drinks cabinets has to have them belonging to the group marketing *director* of Thom

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Cook/a *director* of the Fitness Centre/the *owner* of Astrohome. There's a strong, unquestioning sense of 'right' and 'wrong' in both editorial and advertising: Are You Wearing The *Right* Aftershave; If It's Not Bols You're Mixing With The *Wrong* Sort. Nowhere is there any trace of what you might call compassion.

If *OM* and its counterparts are really going to be read by the New Man, a lot of genuine effort on the part of women is going to be dreadfully undermined. It's very rarely that I do not wish success to new publication, new communication. On this occasion I hope, I really do hope, that the British man takes one look and scurries back to the sanctity of his daily *Sun*. Not a sentiment I thought I would ever express.

Carol Sarler

CRITICS CHOICE
Music

Pop's Young Fogeys

'We're a really hard, explosive rock'n'roll band. We don't wear make-up, for a start'. Tony Hadley of Spandau Ballet is sorting out the men from Boy George. Spandau have reached a position in which they can forget the days when they drew the scorn of the pop press for their effete clothes and their claims to be developing a sophisticated new form of European pop. Now Hadley is talking rock'n'roll tradition. He compares the competition between his band and Duran Duran with that between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. He feels established.

And no wonder. The major trend in British pop over the last year has been the confirmation by the industry of the status of the most lucrative acts. Although sales are generated mainly by the broadcast media, it is the tabloid press which conducts the day-to-day construction of the new establishment. Duran Duran, Culture Club, Spandau and Wham! are characters who, this year, have been assembled into a cast. It's a big business soap opera in which the idea of competition is articulated through the bitching into which the performers are now being nudged.

As for George, a deterioration in his manners and in the ticket sales for his US shows make for stormy press coverage. The problem with him is that certain limits have been set for the George discourse. The effect is to maximise reference and minimise analysis: lots of allusions in magazines to 'gender-bending' and very little examination of its implications. This leaves absolutely nothing new left to say about George except that he has a new hairstyle, and so he has obliged with several.

The more Wham!'s star rises, the more they take themselves in hand. Gone is the dabbling in leather and homoeroticism. This year's Wham! are Messrs Clean; blow-dried, soft-focussed and moving firmly into the middle of the road. The boys are looking more American in their leisurewear and longish locks, and Americans are looking more British. This the homogenisation of video, a mid-Atlantic phenomenon which charts Wham! across the United States via cable TV, their CHOOSE LIFE Katherine Hamnett t-shirts no doubt being taken to signify health rather than opposition to state power. Over here, the charts have an increasingly mid-Atlantic flavour. The positive side of the import business is the increasing recognition being given to soul performers. Even if Michael Jackson's success has caused his reclassification as a 'rock' artist.

Where do Frankie Goes To Hollywood fit in? After a lengthy incubation period for 'Relax', a ritual exploitation of a BBC ban and a recordbreaking chart run, Frankie had suddenly become the biggest thing of all. An early press release declared that Duran Duran were not fit to carry out various sanitary services for Frankie. ZTT existed to return prettiness, passion and uncertainty into pop, it was claimed.

The method depends on huge sums of money and a breathtaking, promiscuous appropriation of images and ideas. The rules of marketing and copywriting are bent, basically so that A&R man Paul Morley can do what he pleases. ZTT has become a vanity publishing outfit second only to Robert Maxwell's. The polarity between 'subversion' and money-making

is irrelevant because there is no political programme, only teases. It has very amusing effects, such as the deal through which the *Daily Express* offered its readers t-shirts bearing the slogan 'ARM THE UNEMPLOYED'. (As for the *Mirror*, it tempted its readers with imitation military medals, as worn by Frankie's lead singer Holly Johnson). The marketing for the LP seems to be slipping into the conventional. For all that, though, one of the most stinging moments in 'Threads' was when actor Patrick Allen's voice was heard intoning the genuine pre-recorded message: 'When you hear the air attack warning. . .'. It was just like 'Two Tribes'.

Marek Kohn

In case you didn't know . . .
Frankie Goes to Hollywood have issued two singles this year **Relax**, and **Two Tribes. Welcome to the Pleasure Dome** is currently No 1 in the album charts. Wham!'s LP of the year is **Make It Big** while Culture Club have **Waking Up With the House on Fire.** Michael Jackson's **Thriller** has been in the charts for more than 100 weeks.

CRITICS CHOICE
Video

Video Viewpoint

Perhaps 1984 will be remembered in some small footnote as the year in which video tapes started to live up to the claims several people, mostly video producers to be sure, had been making for the past couple of

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years – that video cassettes could be a good way of pulling meetings together, providing a focus for discussion, of providing counter-information to television. It is by no means cut and dry, but video production commissioned or made for use by campaigns and unions is becoming more coherent, is becoming watchable/useable and, perhaps above all, cheap and accessible.

The most significant example to date of cooperation in production must be the six **Miners' Campaign Tapes.** Filmed by video workshops across the UK and edited centrally, these tapes recall the work of the communist film-makers of the early 30s. The Miners' Tapes have been widely used, with over 1,000 copies in circulation and, in Birmingham, one in almost daily use. This cooperation by video workshops is not isolated; many independent producers as well work closely with campaigns, unions and tradé councils.

Particularly over the last couple of years management videos have progressed from presenting the annual accounts, a morale boosting chat from a director or two, to introducing redundancy programmes. These videos are intended to pre-empt too much resistance. Often well known TV figures are involved and offer a critical view of the management proposal, suggesting in the video that redundancies are not called for, asking questions not unlike those a steward might put on behalf of the members. Management are put on the spot. But the effect is to take conflict away from the shop-floor, away from the real point of confrontation, to usurp possible union responses by rehearsing likely outcomes and showing, despite it all, that management has all the cards.

In the last couple of years some unions in the public sector particularly, have adopted a less top-down approach to video making. We now see more interesting material emerging, the use of animation and dramatic sequences, and indications that a distinctive propaganda is developing.

Pricing in the past was based on an institutional market that, in reality, never existed for the kind of tapes most union and campaign producers were making. Sometimes cassettes cost upwards of £70 each. With tapes now being distributed regularly in quantities of 500 or more on issues like privatisation, rights for trainees on YTS, the miners' campaign, it is realistic to anticipate branches and campaigns buying or making other arrangements to have relatively permanent access to equipment. Reducing the price of a cassette to £10 or thereabouts has meant that distribution becomes a massive task, involving extra work. The idea of recouping production costs in campaign and union videos from distribution has been a longstanding myth – few groups can point to solvency through this means. But tapes with this level of circulation begin to become important in their own right, as complementary publicity to go with leaflets and newspapers. It becomes possible to envisage tapes taking a realistic and regular role in union communications, relying on publicity, education and research as their main contributors.

Dave Rushton

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EVENTS

- **William Morris,** Kensington CP, Sunday 9 December, details see Update.
- **William Morris Centenary,** speaker Raphael Samuel, 8pm, Thursday 13 December, South Woodford Library. Organised by Wanstead/Woodford CP.

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They Shoot ... me Bandits Yol 48 Hours A Kind of Loving A Night at the Opera Abigail's Party Nuts in May Under Fire Aguirre – Wrath of God
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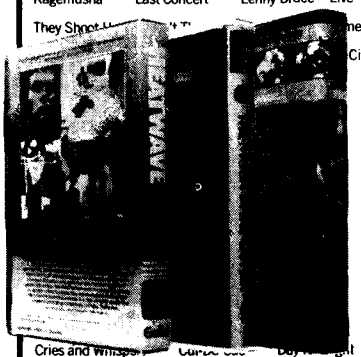

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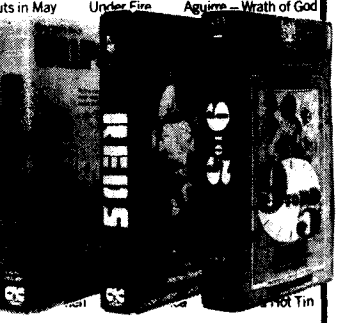

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VIEWPOINT

● **Keith Hill and Ken Coates look at the challenge posed by the 1984 Trade Union Act, discussed last month by Peter Hain.**

KEITH HILL
Unions Labour: the nitty gritties

For most affiliated unions, the fight for a majority 'yes' vote in the political fund ballots will take the form of an emergency rescue operation. Most unions have grievously neglected the business of political education amongst any but a narrow activist band within their memberships. There is no special adherence to the Labour Party amongst trade unionists, and there is certainly little understanding of the functions of political funds.

To win in the ballots, trade unions will have to grapple with a set of attitudes towards politics which are largely indistinguishable from those prevailing in the rest of society and which are likely to be suspicious of the political activities of trade unions. To imagine that, in these circumstances, the political fund campaign represents the opportunity of a socialist breakthrough is just pie in the sky.

This is not to say that serious opportunities do not arise from the necessity of the ballots for important changes in the way trade unions convey political messages to their members or for the beginnings of a permanent process of mobilisation around the Labour Party. One thing is certain: the issue of the Labour Party connection will be inescapable. Our opponents will see to that, and the outcome of the ballots will be inextricably linked to the standing of the party when the ballots are taken.

We cannot escape the question of the Labour Party affiliation, nor should we try to. But we shall need to pose that Labour Party connection in terms of the utmost pragmatism to trade union members.

As the by now well-publicised MORI poll demonstrated, the most obvious and appealing practical case for the political fund is representation in parliament. Over half the affiliated unions have sponsored members of parliament, and in numerical terms these unions contain the overwhelming majority of affiliated trade union members. It will not escape the notice of trade unionists that these sponsored members are Labour MPs. Unions will need to project the work records of sponsored MPs on behalf of their memberships.

For both sponsored MPs with a proven record and those who have been less active to date, the next 12 months must see an upsurge of activity on substantive issues of concern to rank-and-file trade unionists. For it is by establishing the link between the day-to-day industrial and workplace concerns of the political fund that the most secure basis can be laid for victory in the ballots. Pragmatic self-interest is the temper of the electorate when it comes to vote. In the short time available before the political fund ballots, it is unreasonable to expect any other motivation from trade union members.

For many trade unionists the most serious challenges in recent years have stemmed directly from the policies of the Thatcher government. Unions will need to explain how the political funds have paid for their campaigns against the closure threats, the cuts in services, the privatisation etc, and how the loss of these funds would mean the end of such campaigning activity in defence of members' interests. They will also need to spell out Labour's record of opposition to Tory policies. Nor should they neglect to set out Labour's positive policies towards the business of trade unions to which their members attach the highest priority, namely health and safety at work, conditions, job protection, improving wages, pensions and equal opportunities.

If trade unionists are to be persuaded that there is a direct link between their experience at work and the political fund issue, the focus of communications in the campaign will have to be highly specific to sections of trade union memberships. This is vital in the general unions, but applies in large measure also in the so-called industrial unions.

Conventional techniques of communication within trade unions will doubtless play a large part in the campaign: the journals, newsletters, leaflets and posters. The issue will doubtless also be raised through the conventional branch structures of unions. Yet, the truth is that existing channels of communications within unions touch only a miniscule proportion of their memberships. Since the opportunity to vote in the ballots will be easy, it is indispensable that the message in favour of the political fund should reach all trade unionists.

In the final analysis the campaign will be won by personal discussion and persuasion amongst grass roots trade unionists in the workplace. To penetrate this far demands a radically new approach towards communication within most unions. They will have to learn how to campaign amongst their own members, and for this a new structure of contact between the centre and the base must be developed. It will, of course, be the activists who carry through this campaign, and, first of all, they will have to be systematically identified.

But beyond that, campaigning must be recognised as a skilled activity which requires training and regular support in order to sustain a coherent approach. Providing this service to activists will be a serious challenge to trade union organisation and resources.

The ballots must not be treated simply as a political threat but as an organisation challenge. The effect of the campaign will be to deepen the attachment of many trade unionists to the Labour Party, but widen aspirations for extending support for socialist values will of necessity be unfulfilled in the short period leading up to the ballots. These ambitions can only be pursued if most of the ballots produce positive outcome, and that is the immediate task. Win or lose, the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party will never be the same again.

KEN COATES
Ballot Boycott

Peter Hain is very largely right to emphasise the weakness of the Labour Part

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trade union connections at the grassroots. Partly this results from a little discussed constitutional reform which slid through the party conference back in 1965. Then, the old basis of affiliation was abolished. This had entitled all those members of an affiliated union who did not actually belong to opposing (or proscribed) bodies to play a full part in the internal life of the party from the level of its wards and branches up to that of the Annual Conference itself. After 1965 trade unionists who wished to be involved in the party's work had to seek double membership: they were obliged to become individual members as well as affiliated ones.

But the reform did not have the desired effect of increasing the numbers of trade unionists willing to become individual members. On the contrary, it contributed to the undesirable diminution of direct involvement by union branches at local levels. It also ensured that affiliation became a corporate status, and this turned the political levy into a kind of poll tax. In all probability, the Labour Party will find it necessary to reconsider this matter, and to redefine the status of affiliated bodies, whether they are unions, other mass organisations, or specialised societies, if these unanticipated results of the 1965 reform are to be rectified.

Mrs Thatcher's latest Trade Union Act is the culmination of a legislative campaign to weaken the labour movement. For the first time, it focuses directly on trade union political activities. It can be seen as an attempt to forestall the natural swing from industrial to political activity which is normally observed in times of slump. GDH Cole used to speak of a pendulum which swung between industrial and political forms of action. The 1984 Trade Union Act is an attempt to disconnect the pendulum, and thus reduce trade union action to impotence. Other events are strictly related to this co-ordinated government strategy. The provocation of the miners' strike, the management of certain set-piece confrontations on the picket lines, the whole barrage of official propaganda, all make sense as part of a preparation for the enforcement of the ballots in the 1984 Act.

Where I think Peter Hain's recommendations are unwise is in his assumptions that ballots about the continuation of a political fund are different in principle from compulsory strike ballots or elections of officers. In fact, all these impositions represent major governmental interventions in the determination of union rules. These undermine the freedom of association, and thus jeopardise the very basis of political pluralism in Britain. This government intervention is manifestly calculated to restrict trade union freedoms and its effect will therefore be to weaken democracy, as people are alienated by its demagogic invocation. It was an earlier government intervention which established the 1913 law creating political funds. Nearly all unions opposed this law as an intrusion, and an unwarranted restriction of trade union rights, depriving unions of the freedom to spend their money as they wished. The requirement for a decennial ballot is an even greater intrusion.

That the Government has legislated to strengthen an old usurpation of authority is bad enough. That its intention in doing this is to cripple the opposition in parliament and the country at large makes it worse again. Even if all the funds were confirmed, the new law would still be an iniquity. The threat of reconstruction of a major political party is, in modern terms, a profound constitutional change. Such a change could never be justified unless it applied even-handedly to all parties in the field. Evidently it would be necessary to control company donations to the Conservative Party as stringently as it restricted trade union involvement with political bodies. Indeed, the original Osborne judgement, out of which we got the 1913 Act, actually placed unions *and companies* on the same level, although no attempt to enforce this against companies has ever yet succeeded.

For this reason above all others, it seems right to resist the new law. If unions were to refuse to apply the prescribed ballots, of course, they could ultimately be prevented from giving money to the Labour Party. That party would then suffer loss of revenue, at least until the repeal of the Act. But repeal would be the more likely to the extent that the Government was led into this very insecure territory by the implementation of its own oppressive act. The Labour Party would be well advised to make it clear that nobody would be disaffiliated if they were barred from paying their subscriptions as a result of this unjust legislation. The moral ties between unions and the party could not be undermined, but would be strengthened in the ensuing argument. Legal intervention to stop David Basnett or Ron Todd from carrying through any part of their political duties would point up a fundamental injustice, and this would be very difficult to defend. Meantime, after careful study of the original Osborne judgement, a whole succession of actions should be taken against company payments to the Conservative Party. Whether these 'won' or 'lost', the whole pattern of bias in the 1984 Act would be openly revealed.

This key issue apart, Peter Hain is right. Never was it more necessary to campaign, and to explain, but also to involve trade union members in seeking to solve the major political issues. Today political action is the most relevant response for many trade unionists in many areas of their work. Such action may only partly devolve upon the Labour Party, but of course it is unimaginable that it can be effective if that party is undermined.

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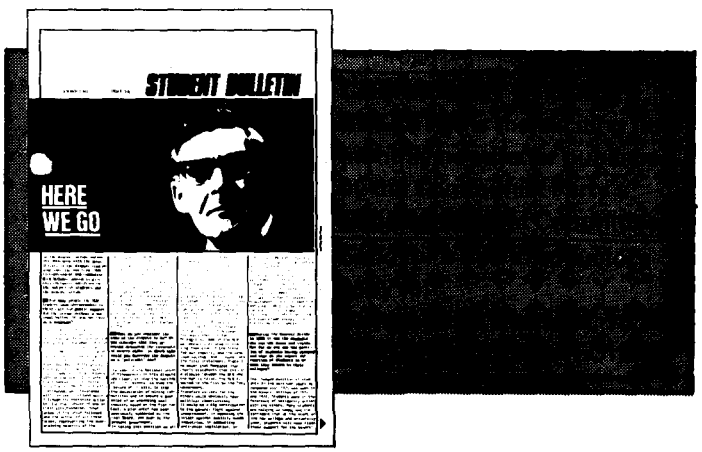

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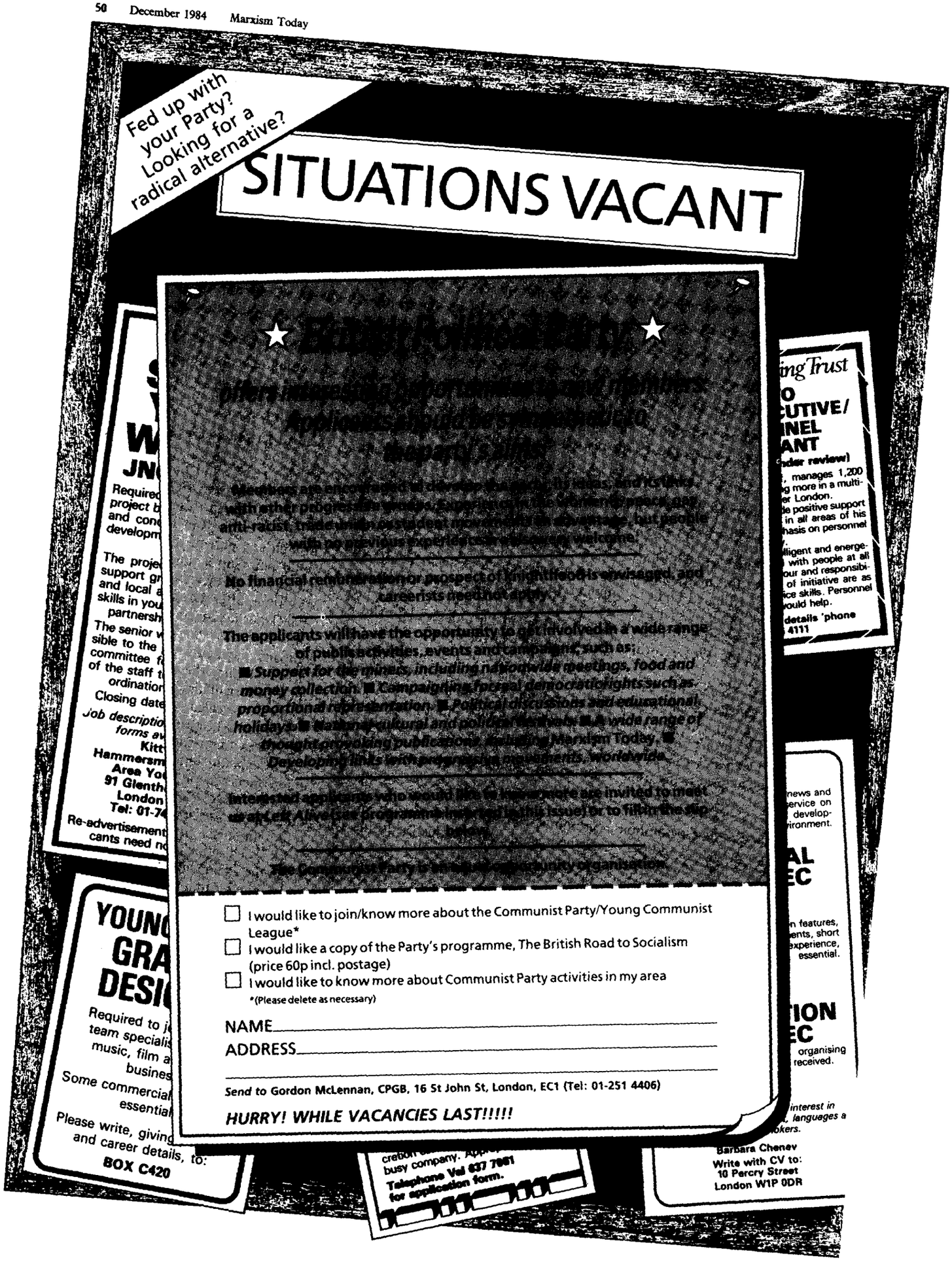

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Letters

WHO IS BLACK?

In their article on Black Sections (*MT*, October), Iqbal Wahhab and Marc Wadsworth contend that those who oppose black sections are racist or scared of the electoral consequences of fielding black candidates. But as the excellent debate at Labour Party Conference showed, there are many black and Asian party members, who for many good reasons oppose the creation of formal black sections.

Many arguments exist against black sections, including that they will not be representative of black and Asian people; that they will lead to ghettoisation and marginalisation; that there is little in common between non-white ethnic groupings; and that the experience of trying to set up black trade union sections was not a happy one.

But of particular interest to us – an Asian married to a white – is the question of who is 'black'? Will our children or indeed the Irish, Turks, Greeks, Vietnamese and Chinese of our constituency (all of whom are under-represented) count as black? And if supporters of black sections think these are just constitutional nibles they should recall another debate at Labour Party Conference in which another badly thought out proposal fell mainly because of its tactical shortcomings rather than its principle.

If there is to be separate and formal black representation then the constituency of those entitled to vote must be clearly defined. And the only possible definitions are those employed in Apartheid South Africa with its racially defined electorates.

The under-representation of ethnic minorities within the Labour Party is a problem, particularly amongst the working class, but it is by no means clear that black sections are the way forward.

Nasreen Rahman and Doug Jones, London

RELEVANT THEORY

I am pleased to see that recent gibes from fellow letter-writers about the content of *Marxism Today* and the relevance of its title have borne fruit in Stuart Hall's excellent article on the state (*MT*, November). I do hope that this very interesting investigation of the Left's ambivalent position regarding the state is but the first of a whole range of articles concerning applicable theory which, if they followed Stuart Hall's example, would certainly not transform *Marxism Today* into a closed, 'intellectuals only' magazine.

Let's have more of the same; I am sure that interesting theoretical discussions would greatly complement articles on the arts and current affairs.

James Arrowsmith, Liverpool

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

With all due respect to Eric Hobsbawm, undeniably our best economic and social historian, his interview of Neil Kinnock (MT, October) was a missed opportunity.

Marxism Today being the Communist Party's theoretical organ and Eric being a Marxist and a Communist, I, for one, expected questions bearing that stamp. Instead they could have come from any leftwing member of the Labour Party, or even one holding centre views, since there was no reference even to the sentiments expressed in Clause 4 of the party's consitution.

Why didn't Eric ask, for example, about the failure of previous Labour governments and how Kinnock can avoid a similar catastrophe, especially since he has adopted a wage-restraint policy such as brought down the Callaghan-Healey government?

Again, when Kinnock complained about the press being almost wholly Tory, why didn't Eric ask him what he would do about it if and when Labour is returned? (Incidentally, why didn't he mention the *Morning Star*?)

It may be that he didn't want the interview to develop into a quarrel; but searching questions could have been put in such a manner as to draw responses without too much antagonism. Hobsbawm is, I am quite sure, capable of doing so, but he didn't; and the result was hardly worth the effort of reading, let alone Marxist.

H Frankel, Clapham, London.

SIMPLE HAPPINESS

Stuart Hall's article (MT, November) has helped to push back the frontiers within which the concept of the socialist state has been generally conceived.

Any new form of society must in essence be exploratory, because we are trying to discover alternatives which can add to the sum total of human happiness. It may sound very simplistic to suggest that happiness can be obtained, but at least we can organise society for the mutual well being of individuals, so that they can obtain some measure of self-fulfilment, in leisure and work, and in the arts.

Also we should extend our considerations to the Third World, to free those who are less fortunate than ourselves from the fear of hunger and famine.

Norman Mason, Norfolk.

We welcome your letters for the January issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office not later than 7 December. The editor reserves the right to cut letters.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Victoria Brittain is the editor of the *Guardian's* Third World Review and a member of the editorial committee of *New Left Review*.
James Freestone is an industrial journalist.
Paul Fox is a journalist who has written about the US for many years.
Richard Sharpe is editor of *Computing*.
Sheila Rowbotham is the author of *Dreams and Dilemmas* and other socialist feminist books.
John Gittings is an assistant foreign news editor of the *Guardian* and specialist on China.
Ken Livingstone is leader of the Greater London Council.
Beatrix Campbell is the author of *Wigan Pier Revisited* and a member of the Communist Party.
John Grahl is a lecturer in economics at Queen Mary College, London and a member of the Communist Party's Economic Committee.
Gregor McLennan is co-editor of *State and Society in Contemporary Britain* and a member of the Communist Party.
John Berger is the author of *Ways of Seeing*. His latest book is *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*.
Geoff Dyer has contributed to *City Limits, Literary Review* and *Emergency*.
Paul Marshall is unemployed and hitched from Truro to South Wales in August in search of the coal dispute.
Anne Phillips is the author of *Hidden Hands* and lectures in politics at City of London Polytechnic.
Peter Riddell is the political editor of the *Financial Times*.
Joanna Goulding has published many short stories and two novels.
Carol Sarler is a journalist who edited *Honey* until a year ago.
Marek Kohn writes for the music press.
Dave Rushton works as a producer and designer at Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre.
Keith Hill is political liaison officer for the National Union of Railwaymen.
Ken Coates was one of the founders of the Institute for Workers Control and is a member of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

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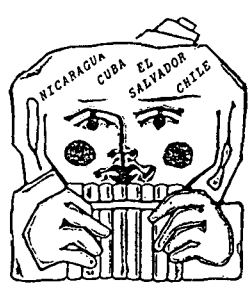

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Up Date

NEWS

A Radical Bookshop For Cambridge Grapevine reopens this month, run by a group of volunteers, mostly unwaged. Coverage will include Socialist, Feminist, Anarchist and 3rd World literature – material that is unavailable or marginalised elsewhere in Cambridge. Watch out for special opening events. For relaunch details ring Cambridge 315865 (12-6pm). New address: Grapevine Bookshop, Unit 6, Dales Brewery, Gwydir St, Cambridge CB1 2LJ.

CONFERENCES

Defend Union Political Funds Dec 1 A campaign conference. Speakers include Ron Todd, Ken Livingstone, Tom Sawyer, Robin Cook MP, Peter Hain, Jean McCrindle (Women Against Pit Closures) 10am-4.30pm. Organised by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee at Central Hall, Westminster, London Fee £3.00 Details from 01-439 3749.

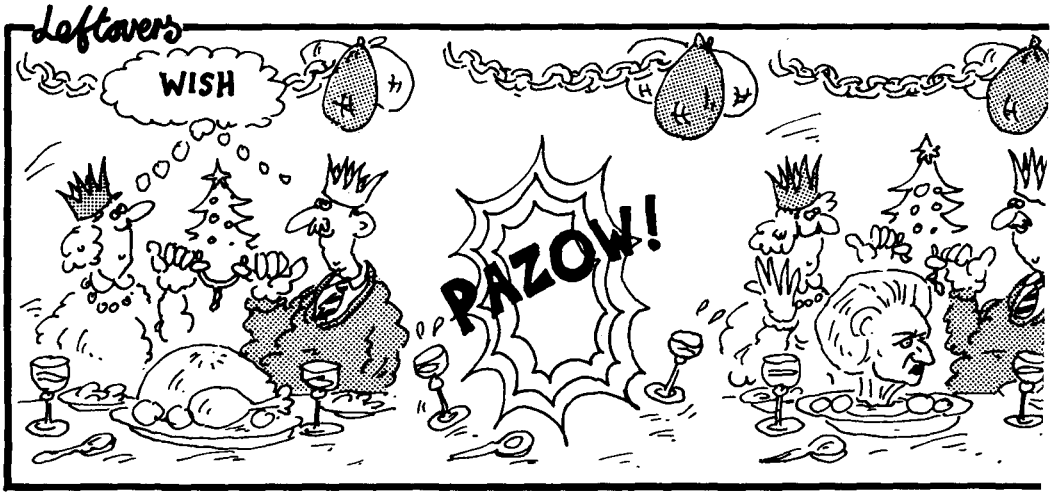
TUC Special Conference on Local Government 4 Dec. A joint initiative between the TUC and rate capped councils. 10.30-4.30pm at Congress House, Gt Russell St, WC1.

Beyond Un/popular Education 8 Dec. Day conference to examine 'Alternatives to Schooling for the Dole'. Speakers include Miriam David, James Donald, David Hargreaves, Ken Jones, Valerie Walkerdine, Paul Willis, Michael Young. At Institute of Education, Gordon Sq, London. Fee £5.00 (unwaged £2.00) Creche. Contact Phil Cohen, 57 Gordon Sq, WCIH ONT (01 636 1500 ext 766).

Communist Party Women's National Conference 8-9 Dec. This includes a session on Women and Racism. Observers as well as delegates from districts and advisories welcome. At 16 St John St, London EC1. Contact 01 251 4406.

MEETINGS

Primary purpose rules Dec 8 (Sat) Preparatory meeting to discuss major national campaign. Co-sponsored by CARL, JCWI, Midlands NALGO EOC, GLC Anti-Deportations Working Group, Immigration Widows Campaign and Divided Families Campaign. Apply to CARL, 56 Edithna Street, London SW9 9JP (01 733 8508).



The militarisation of psychology Dec 10. A seminar to be opened by Tim Shallice, part of the 'Beneath the White Coat' series on science and politics organised by the British Society for Social Responsibility in the Sciences 6.30 at Adam's Arms, 4 Conway St, London W1.

EVENTS

Working for a Change Dec 1 (Sat) Day of discussion and debate on employment and unemployment in the West Midlands. 10-4.30 at Centre 13, School Rd, Moseley, Birmingham. Speakers include Sam Aaronovitch, Angela Coyle, Dan Finn, Andrew Nickson, Jean Biggs. Plus stalls, creche, food. £2/£1. Presented by Kings Heath CP and *Marxism Today*.

Music from El Salvador 7 Dec (Fri). International evening for El Salvador with Yolocamba I-ta, Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl, and Barricada. 8pm at the LSE. Tickets £3.50 (£2 unwaged) from ELSSOC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

Marxism Today Christmas Party 14 Dec (Fri) Buffet, disco, late bar. 8.00pm at New Merlins Cave, Margery St, WC1. Tickets £2.00 (£1 unwaged). Enquiries to Trudie 01 251 4406. Bring Christmas presents for miners' kids.

William Morris Today 9 Dec (Sun) Kensington CP event. Speakers John Kay, Jackie Heywood plus Childfun, food, exhibitions, bookstalls and more. Details from Brian Nicholls 01 229 7456.

PUBLICATIONS

Spare Rib Diary Attractive and well illustrated containing 43 pages of useful addresses, reading and contacts plus a menstrual calender £3.00.

Socialist Worker Diary Around the theme of 'Socialism & War' this reverts to rather traditional format and graphics and as it concentrates on the 'heroes' of socialist struggle will have little appeal to feminists £2.75.

Housmans Peace Diary This has a totally new look with unusual wood cut style graphics which don't intrude on the writing space. Contains historical and current facts and information on peace issues £3.00.

Irish Women's Guidebook and Diary In a similar vein to Spare Rib, an Irish women's pocket resource centre. There are sections on well womens' centres, a menstrual calender and a lot of political information for those interested in Ireland £2.95.

Contemporary Women Artists Diary A large spiral bound diary teaming with beautiful colour paintings covering all aspects of women's art. Each page covers a week but there are monthly sections which allow you to take the month in at a glance. Produced by Women's Press £4.50.

Marx for Beginners Diary A real innovation this diary is presented in the style of the 'beginners books'. In large (book sized) format and ring bound it has 2 days to a page, lots of pictures and cartoons, includes a Marx Family Tree, brief Marx chronology, Marx After Life section, quotes and source material £3.95.

'Singing for our lives' The Better Days 1985 Peace Calender, with a quote for every day and peace songs drawings and posters £2.50.

'In our own image' The Deptford Women's Photography Project Calendar with large black and white photographs highlighting aspects o women's life £2.00.

1985 Resistance The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign Calendar presented in a very original graffiti style, with photographs showing th many forms of resistance used by the people of El Salvador in their struggle for liberation £3.00.

Chile Protest Calendar Contains 1 pages featuring full colour photographs of some of the best known Chilean patchworks produced by the women of Santiag £3.00. Published by the Chile Committee for Human Rights. Available from them at 266 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9JY (837 7561).

1985 Democracy Calendar A mu for Ken Livingstone fans, it contains bright and breezy photos accompanying the slogans used in the campaign to retain the GLC. Produced by Democracy Calenda £2.95.

Entries for the January Upd should be sent as soon as possi (latest date Friday 7 December, Maria Loftus, Marxism Today St John Street London EC1 or 01-251 4406 or 01-249 9509 (ev ings). Space is limited. We can guarantee the appearance of y listing. However a booking in new classified section will guar tee entry in both classifieds update.

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